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# The Fruits of Empire: Contextualizing Food in Post-Civil War American Art and Culture

Shana Klein

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**The Fruits of Empire: Contextualizing Food in Post-Civil War  
American Art and Culture**

**by**

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DISSERTATION

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# **THE FRUITS OF EMPIRE: CONTEXTUALIZING FOOD IN POST-CIVIL WAR AMERICAN ART AND CULTURE**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The Fruits of Empire* is a social and visual history of food in American art. With four fruit case-studies on representations of grapes, oranges, watermelons, and bananas, this project demonstrates how the visual culture of food provides a platform for examining the expansion and reconstruction of the United States in the decades following the Civil War. While chapters on grape and orange representations from California and Florida reveal the ways in which fruit serviced national expansion and the colonization of America's fruit-lands, a chapter on watermelon imagery illustrates the racial stereotypes assigned to food that reinforced social divisions between white from "colored" eaters. A final chapter on depictions of bananas investigates the exploitation of land and labor underwriting American fruit corporations in Central America. By directing attention to representations of fruit in the Sunbelt and broader Americas, this dissertation reorients the American Art History canon centered in the Northeast to art and artists in the country's borders. This project also widens the scope of American Art History by looking beyond the fine arts to the visual culture of cookbooks, crate labels, and

silverware. Examining those who labored and prepared the fruits visible in artistic depictions sheds light on another overlooked subject. In the end, readers discover that representations of food in American art and culture are neither innocent nor straight forward, but politically-charged pictures driven by ideologies that support or challenge an imperial agenda in North America. By excavating the cultural histories of food in American art, *The Fruits of Empire* reveals how the cultivation of fruit in soil and on canvas participated in the cultivation of American empire.

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## Introduction

In 1886, the commissioner of the Viticultural Convention of the United States declared that “America is a nation of fruit-eaters.”<sup>1</sup> The commissioner was correct. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, Americans consumed an unprecedented amount of fruit as it grew more favorable in public opinion and more accessible with advancements in refrigeration.<sup>2</sup> Americans also increasingly consumed fruit in visual form through representations in paintings, trade cards, crate labels, print illustrations, and world’s fair exhibits. While pictures abounding with fruit were a testament to the nation’s growing wealth, they also carried political meanings specific to the expansion and reconstruction of American empire.<sup>3</sup> Representations of fruit from the American South and West are particularly meaningful to the construction of American empire for they reflect a national agenda to colonize the land and resources of fruit-growing frontiers. Depictions of fruit cultivated by African- and Central Americans also illustrate

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<sup>1</sup> Commissioner W. T. Coleman, “The Pure American Wines: A Plea for the Use of the Native-Grown Article,” *Washington Post* (May 19, 1886) in the “Henry Leslie Lyman Scrapbook,” Doc. 1165 v. 1 (1853-1893) in the collection of the Winterthur Library.

<sup>2</sup> In the early nineteenth century, the consumption of raw fruit was not widespread. Fruit was thought to be unsavory, difficult to digest, and in some instances, poisonous. Kathryn Grover, *Dining in America 1850-1900* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 94; Trudy Eden, *The Early American Table: Food and Society in the New World* (Champaign Urbana: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), 28; Keith Stavely and Kathleen Fitzgerald, *America’s Founding Food: the Story of New England Cooking* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 207.

<sup>3</sup> This project subscribes to the classical definition of the word “empire,” which refers to the systems of colonization driven by people in various roles, capacities, and bodies of government to exert control and dominance over people, places, and things. This project specifically understands empire as an organization of power driven by the occupation of land, pursuit of a “civilizing mission,” economic exploitation, and political intervention. This definition is drawn from the anthology, *Lessons of Empire: Imperial Histories and American Power*, which defines empire as “a political unit that is large and expansionist (or with memories of an expansionist past), reproducing differentiation and inequality among people it incorporates.” *Lessons of Empire*, Ed. Craig Calhoun, Frederick Cooper, Kevin Moore (New York: New Press, 2006) and Eric T. Love’s *Race over Empire: Racism and U.S. Imperialism, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 3.

the racial meanings assigned to food that reinforced social divisions separating white from “colored” eaters. Conversations about the racial purity of fruit laborers and the naturalization of foreign food and people on native soil informed fruit pictures as well. The cultivation and representation of fruit, therefore, struck the very nerve of national debates over land, labor, race, and citizenship. In the same way that cotton, mahogany, and silk have been conduits for understanding American politics, food is another cultural artifact that has shaped and reflected the ascendancy of the American empire.<sup>4</sup> This project on American still-life representation is a social history of fruit imagery as much as a history of fruit itself.

In order to excavate the meanings buried in representations of fruit, one must look at fruit imagery from the perspective of nineteenth-century artists and viewers who were well educated on how and from where their food was produced. Unlike many consumers today who are divorced from systems of food production, many nineteenth-century consumers could read a food’s season and origins simply by looking at it.<sup>5</sup> This agricultural literacy extended to artists who carefully considered where food was produced, who labored it, and how much it cost before painting it on canvas. The most immediate concern for a fruit painter was what foods were currently in season and available for painting. Still-life artist Andrew John Henry Way, for instance, suggested that apricots are good for “an early summer study,” while apples are best to paint in the

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<sup>4</sup> Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Knopf, 2014); Jennifer L. Anderson, *Mahogany: The Cost of Luxury in Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012); Jacqueline Field, Marjorie Seneschal, and Madelyn Shaw, *American Silk, 1830-1930: Entrepreneurs and Artifact* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> It is worth mentioning that in the late-nineteenth century, viewers were also starting to lose their agricultural literacy at this time due to advancements in technology that produced foods in faraway locations, distancing consumers from the production of food.

fall and winter months when they have reached “their highest perfection.”<sup>6</sup> Tropical and Southern fruits, he said, are interesting to paint whenever they “find their way to our markets occasionally.”<sup>7</sup> When studying abroad in France, Way also considered the availability of grapes, noting how the fruit has increased in price 100 percent since becoming a major export for France and Great Britain.<sup>8</sup> Fruit, consequently, was intricately linked to the economic and political landscape of a country. The fact that many patrons of fruit painters were also fruit experts further required artists to become acquainted with the discipline of agriculture.<sup>9</sup> Many still-life artists thus possessed an education in both fruit and art.

It was timely to pursue a career in fruit painting in the late-nineteenth century when still lifes of fruit flooded the American market. The growing number of still-life

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<sup>6</sup> Andrew John Henry Way, “Fruit-Painting in Oils-Small Fruit, Cherries, Apricots, Wild Fruits,” *Art Amateur* 16.5 (Apr. 1887), 104 and “Fruit-Painting in Oils-Treatment of Pineapples, Oranges, Lemons, Bananas and Apples,” *Art Amateur* 16.2 (Jan. 1887), 32.

<sup>7</sup> Way, “Fruit-Painting in Oils-Treatment of Pineapples, Oranges, Lemons, Bananas and Apples,” *Art Amateur* 16.2 (Jan. 1887), 32. Way also said, “During the months of February, March, and April, the fruit-painter is almost at a loss for subjects beyond some foreign productions, and...becomes somewhat difficult to find subjects upon which to talk.” “Fruit-Painting in Oils,” *Art Amateur* 16.3 (Feb. 1887): 60.

<sup>8</sup> “Letter from AJH Way, Oct. 30, 1865,” p. 18 in *Artists Letters to Alfred Jacob Miller, 1818-1874* in the J. Hall Pleasants Papers in the Special Collections at the Maryland Historical Society.

<sup>9</sup> Fruit painting, however, did not win much respect in the nineteenth century since it was perceived as a mindless and mechanical exercise in the pursuit of replicating nature. Unlike the intellectual and moral lessons painted in History and Allegorical painting, still-life painting was thought to be devoid of didacticism. A critic for the *North American Review* wrote, “We would not absolutely denounce what is called still-life painting, but we value it very lightly; and we protest against...those works, of which the whole supposed merit consists in an imitation of what is in itself entirely insignificant...” American artist Samuel Morse admitted that “although it ranks thus low in the scale of works of art, [still life] has always been popular, and for the very obvious reason, that its chief merit is intelligible to all.” An article in the *Art Amateur* as late as 1886 similarly confessed that “the painting of fruit and still-life is generally considered a lower and unimportant branch of art when compared with figure and landscape painting...as there are less difficulties to contend with in its pursuits and not the opportunities they offer for the embodiment of sentiment and imagination.” “The Exhibition of Pictures at the Athenaeum Gallery,” *North American Review* 33 (October 1831); Samuel Morse, “The Exhibition of the National Academy of Design,” *United States Review and Literary Gazette* 2 (July 1827); L. Donaldson and A.J.H. Way, “Fruit-Painting in Oils,” *Art Amateur* 16.1 (Dec. 1886): 10.



prints auctioned in art unions during the 1840s and '50s can account for its increased production.<sup>10</sup> The depiction of fruit by a swelling number of immigrant artists in America from Northern Europe—a center for still-life painting—also brought attention to the genre.<sup>11</sup> The improving economy after the Civil War was an impetus as well, providing Americans with more money to create and purchase decorative objects like fruit paintings. Advancements in the printing press most dramatically increased the production of still-life pictures since their depiction in prints could now be distributed more widely at cheaper prices with the rise of lithography companies such as Currier and Ives and Louis Prang. It is no coincidence that these companies emerged at the same time as the formation of the dining room, a new space in American homes designed specifically for eating and socializing.<sup>12</sup> In the Victorian dining room, still-life pictures

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<sup>10</sup> William Gerdtz suspects that art unions expanded the popularity of this genre by awarding still-life reproductions to union members through lottery drawings. *Painters of the Humble Truth: Masterpieces of American Still Life 1801-1939* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1981), 82-83.

<sup>11</sup> Still-life painting flourished in Northern Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, carrying religious undertones in paintings of decaying fruits, flowers, and skulls that warned against excessive consumption and reminded viewers of life's transience. A number of still-life paintings in Northern Europe also expressed a contradictory message by showing ornate displays of exotic foods that celebrated European abundance and conquest in territories overseas. The still-life tradition did not gain momentum in North America until the mid-nineteenth century when many artists of Northern-European origin immigrated to America and started to produce still-life paintings. Bruce Evans explains, "few American artists were concerned with still life painting in the first thirty-five years of the century, but the arrival of skilled European immigrant artists and the inception of the art unions revived this art form during the late 1830s and 1840s." *The Paintings of Edward Edmondson, 1830-1884* (Dayton: Dayton Art Institute, 1972), 11; Julie Berger Hochstrasser, *Still Life and Trade in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 4.

<sup>12</sup> In contrast to the eighteenth century when families typically ate meals on benches in the hall or kitchen, families now started congregating in larger dining rooms carved out in the home for eating meals and socializing. For scholarship on the restructuring of the American home and the creation of the dining room, consult: Kenneth Ames, *Death in the Dining Room and Other Tales of Victorian Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992); Kathryn Grover, *Dining in America 1850-1900* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987); Lori E. Rotskoff, "Decorating the Dining-Room: Still-Life Chromolithographs and Domestic Ideology in Nineteenth-Century America," *Journal of American Studies* 31.1 (April, 1997): 19-42; Susan

of fruit adorned paintings, wallpaper, silverware, and dish designs. Still-life pictures of fruit were visible outside the home as well in agricultural contests, world's fair exhibits, crate labels, and trade cards. The ubiquity of fruit imagery and their ability to reflect mainstream culture in the late-nineteenth century is what makes these objects so valuable to study. This project on *The Fruits of Empire* unites “high” and “low” forms of artistic representation inside and outside of the home to evaluate the social politics tethered to the visual culture of fruit.

Investigating this topic reveals how representations of fruit grew popular in a specific historical moment when food was used to picture the identity and progress of the country. Food was so useful for portraying American identity because food was, and continues to be, closely tied to American nationalism. Since the eighteenth century, Americans invented recipes for independence cake, election cake, and congressional bean soup in honor of the nation's democratic practices.<sup>13</sup> (FIG. 1) Americans even sculpted food in the shape of the nation's most iconic objects, including the Liberty Bell. (FIG. 2) Trade cards that showed foods from New England against the backdrop of an American flag and eagle specifically singled out this region as producing a uniquely American cuisine that helped grow “splendid American citizens.” Performing citizenship through food became an important exercise in the last decades of the nineteenth century when Americans were accused of having no cuisine of their own. This accusation did not sit well in a society that believed “the advancement of a people is measured by its

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Williams, *Savory Suppers and Fashionable Feasts: Dining in Victorian America* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996).

<sup>13</sup> Waverly & Richard de Rochemont, *Eating in America: A History* (Hopewell: Ecco Press, 1995), 102. Recipes for George Washington cake, Robert E. Lee cake, and Abraham Lincoln cake also speak to the ways in which food was used to capture the spirit of America's leaders.

proficiency in the *cuisine*.”<sup>14</sup> Russian Grand Duke Alexis Aleksandrovich was one critic of American food who proclaimed during his visit in 1871 that America possessed an unsophisticated cuisine, plainly derivative of French food and techniques.<sup>15</sup> This outraged American chef James Parkinson who defended American cuisine by listing the “scores and scores of dishes which are distinctly and exclusively American.”<sup>16</sup> Parkinson privileged fruit in his manifesto on American food, saying that in terms of apples, pears, peaches, cherries, and grapes, “America leads the world, and will take the largest number of first-class gold medals.”<sup>17</sup> Parkinson concluded his essay with a dig to the Russian Duke, declaring “we are not the sheep of French pastures.”<sup>18</sup> Food, therefore, was a volatile topic in the late-nineteenth century, entrenched in ideas about nationhood and identity.

Food also turned the country’s attention to more internal debates over land and labor in America. This is evident in the eighteenth century when Americans boycotted sugar, rice, and other foods labored by slaves with the intention of destabilizing slave-

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<sup>14</sup> *The Successful Housekeeper: A Manual Especially Adapted to American Housewives* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Publishing Company, 1884), vi.

<sup>15</sup> James W. Parkinson, “American Dishes at the Centennial” (Philadelphia: King and Baird, 1874).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* Parkinson wrote: “Florida, and California produce admirable specimens of such tropical fruits as oranges, lemons, limes, and figs. Apricots and nectarines grow to a high state of perfection in California...The olive, the citron, and the pomegranate, have lately been transplanted in California, and promise in the near future to equal the best...In pears and peaches, cherries and plums, we equal the best; Also in currants, raspberries and strawberries, persimmons, pawpaws, and cranberries, are exclusively American fruits...with the apple, no other country equal...or approaches us... ‘greenings’ and ‘pippins’ from America, are accounted among the most highly-prized dainties at the feasts of kings, queens, and emperors in Europe.”

<sup>18</sup> To exemplify the uniqueness of American food, Parkinson described Boston-baked pork and beans, New England chowder, pumpkin pie, Jersey sausage, and American corn as a few of the many delicacies created in America, narrowly defining American cuisine by foods from New England. His description of American cuisine did however encompass some foods from the wider Americas, boasting how “half of all the coffee raised in the world is grown in South America; and all the vanilla known to civilization is produced by Mexico.” *Ibid.*

powered industries.<sup>19</sup> Boycotts of slave-labored foods persisted into the Civil War when many Northerners refused to purchase foods or goods produced by slave labor in the South. Southerners, in turn, used the same strategy and boycotted Northern goods, reflecting how American consumers on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line understood that limiting or re-directing one's buying power could undermine an enemy.<sup>20</sup> Americans used food as a tactic of war even before the nation's founding in the seventeenth century when colonial settlers burned down fields of corn grown by Native Americans to threaten their health and survival.<sup>21</sup> The American government would use this strategy again in the late-nineteenth century when they replaced cornmeal with white flour on reservations, prohibiting Native Americans from making traditional meals such as fry bread.<sup>22</sup> Food, in this sense, was a political weapon for empowering one cultural group over another. Historian Sherrie Inness summarized the cultural power of food when she wrote: "food is a historical artifact embedded with the beliefs, ideas, and fears of those individuals who fabricated and consumed them."<sup>23</sup> Since food so tightly cradles the values of a society, it is especially compelling to contextualize food in the late nineteenth century when the

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<sup>19</sup> These boycotts were part of the larger slave free-produce movement, which is discussed in the following texts: Carol Faulkner, "The Root of the Evil: Free Produce and Radical Antislavery, 1820-1860," *Journal of the Early Republic* 27 (Fall 2007): 377-405; Lawrence Glickman, *Buying Power: A History of Consumer Activism in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Ruth Nuremberger, *Free Produce Movement: A Quaker Protest against Slavery* (New York: AMS Press, 1970), 54-57; Stacy Robertson, *Hearts Beating for Liberty: Women Abolitionists in the Old Northwest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2010), 73-81; and Shana Klein, "Cultivating Fruit and Equality in the Still-Life Paintings of Robert Duncanson," *American Art* 29.2 (Summer 2015).

<sup>20</sup> Southern boycotts belonged to the broader "non-intercourse" movement. For more information, see: Glickman, 92-100.

<sup>21</sup> Trudy Eden, *The Early American Table: Food and Society in the New World* (Champaign Urbana: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008); Laura Schenone, *1000 Years Over a Hot Stove: A History of American Women Told Through Food, Recipes, and Remembrances* (2003): 34.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>23</sup> Sherrie Inness, *Kitchen Culture in America: Popular Representations of Food, Gender, and Race* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

country is recovering from four years of civil war, transitioning out of slavery, making incredible strides in technology, contending with the swell in immigration, and moving deeper and deeper into the nation's frontiers.<sup>24</sup> The objective of this project is to understand what food and its representation can tell us about American politics in this time period of incredible change.

### **Methodological Approaches to the Representation of Food**

This project is indebted to Sherrie Inness and other cultural historians who have examined the social meanings endowed in food. Their research has created the foundation for today's Food Studies discipline, which builds upon the scholarship of anthropologists from earlier in the twentieth century. One of the most seminal anthropologists to probe the topic was Claude Levi-Strauss, who wrote *The Raw and the Cooked* in 1964.<sup>25</sup> Based on research he conducted with the indigenous tribes of Brazil, Levi-Strauss concluded in his book that eaters determine what foods are edible and digestible, or delicious and disgusting. In contrast to animals that digest almost anything, Levi-Strauss found significance in the fact that humans make distinctions between edible or inedible food, thereby revealing how food and taste is socially constructed. Levi-Strauss also explored the ways that cultures "civilize" raw food through grilling, roasting, boiling, and other methods of cooking that separate food from their raw and natural state.

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<sup>24</sup> Eric T. Love argues that the time period between 1865 and 1900 was an era of great change as well as a revival in North American expansionism. The passing of the Homestead Act, the Morrill Land Grant Act, and the Pacific Railroad act all contributed to the renewed interest in national expansion. "After 1865," Love writes, "the story of American expansionism begins again." Love, *Race over Empire*, 31.

<sup>25</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss *Mythologiques: The Raw and the Cooked* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969).

*The Raw and the Cooked* continues to be a formative text for scholars deciphering how food is a reflection of human thought and behavior.

In the same years that Claude Levi-Strauss examined foodways in Brazil, Pierre Bourdieu conducted research on the culinary landscape of France in the text, *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* from 1969.<sup>26</sup> Although Bourdieu conducted research on the other side of the world, he arrived at a similar conclusion to Levi-Strauss by finding that taste is a social construction. Bourdieu specifically investigated the relationship between taste and class, examining how the lower classes rely on food for survival in contrast to the upper classes that have the luxury of considering food's taste and appearance, thus using food beyond its basic function to satisfy hunger. Although this idea might seem fairly obvious to readers today, the notion that taste is determined by class or social values was profoundly informative for the disciplines of Anthropology and Food Studies. Bourdieu demonstrates how taste is ideological and produced by an eater's cultural background, upbringing, education, and class.

The anthropological research of Mary Douglas from the 1960s complimented the research of Levi-Strauss and Bourdieu by illustrating how food is a social construction. Douglas, however, took a more sinister look at food in her text *Purity and Danger* from 1966 by considering food's potential to create dirt and pollution in the body.<sup>27</sup> To combat this risk, Douglas explains, humans have created all types of cleaning and digestion rituals to protect the body and stomach from germs. Douglas more deeply investigated the rituals of digestion in her essay "Deciphering a Meal," where she

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<sup>26</sup> Pierre Bordieu, *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, Tr. by Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).

<sup>27</sup> Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 2002).

reinforced how eating food is a socially-structured ritual.<sup>28</sup> From breakfast to dinner, humans have created an ordered pattern of eating dictated by social codes surrounding the “meal.” Douglas argued that these social codes belong to a larger process ensured to protect the body from poison, infection, pollution, or indigestion. This argument falls in step with the findings of Bourdieu and Levi-Strauss by emphasizing what we eat, and how we eat, carries social meaning and “symbolic load.”<sup>29</sup>

At the tail end of the mid-nineteenth century in 1969, Roland Barthes considered the social codes underpinning food in his book series, *Mythologies*.<sup>30</sup> In an essay on chopsticks, Barthes reads the consumption of food as a social language that speaks to the larger habits and attitudes of a society. He finds significant meaning in the semiotic language of food utensils, such as chopsticks, that perform a greater purpose than merely transporting food into the mouth. Barthes argues that chopsticks have a didactic and indexical function; its pointed tip gestures to the food, thereby bringing the food into existence. Unlike the fork that cuts, pierces, and mutilates food, Barthes argues that chopsticks are a softer instrument whose gentle and indexical nature reflects the broader belief system of Eastern cultures. Barthes’s scholarship was foundational in showing how even the utensils we use to eat food can display the structure of a society.

Several scholars today in the arena of Food Studies carry the torch of anthropologists from the mid-twentieth century. Warren Belasco and Andrew Smith, for instance, have been instrumental in studying the history and culture of food and establishing a solid groundwork for the Food Studies Discipline. Their contribution to the Association for the Study of Food and Society, the *Food, Culture, and Society*

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<sup>28</sup> Mary Douglas, “Deciphering a Meal,” *Myth, Symbol, and Culture* 101.1 (1972): 61-83.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>30</sup> Roland Barthes, *Empire of Signs*, Tr. By Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982).

academic journal, and survey textbooks such as *Food: the Key Concepts* have all been foundational to the field, helping to bring legitimacy to a subject that has been typically dismissed as inconsequential, banal, or narrowly limited to the domestic sphere.<sup>31</sup> *The Fruits of Empire* has benefitted from these scholars and the studies of sugar by Sydney Mintz, pineapples by Gary Okihiro, and Mexican food by Jeffrey Pilcher. These texts, which fall under the umbrella of Food Studies, all seek to understand how food participates in “culinary imperialism”—a term invented by Pilcher to describe the use of food in privileging one culture over another.<sup>32</sup> Research by Psyche Forson-Williams and Katharina Vester on food and the discourses of race and gender has also shaped this project on the social dimensions of fruit. *The Fruits of Empire* draws from new and old generations of scholarship to discover what food and its representation signals about American society.

Scholarship from the discipline of Environmental History has been influential on this research as well, urging a deeper investigation into the cultivation of food rather than its consumption. The formative scholarship of Philip Pauly and Frieda Knobloch has shown how the cultivation of food is intensely political and reflective of a society’s intent to conquer land and accumulate power. These scholars analyze the imperial consequences of agriculture and demonstrate how the simple and ancient act of growing food on a plot of land inevitably transforms, domesticates, and enforces dominion over

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<sup>31</sup> Warren Belasco, *Food: The Key Concepts* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2008).

<sup>32</sup> Sydney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin, 1986); Gary Okihiro, *Pineapple Culture: A History of the Tropical and Temperate Zones* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Jeffrey Pilcher, *Que Vivan los Tamales! Food and the Making of Mexican Identity* (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico, 1998).



the natural landscape.<sup>33</sup> Agriculture's role in colonization brings greater meaning to the culture of fruit from the late nineteenth century in North America that worked towards a similar end. Indeed, the professionalization of fruit growing in America coincided and assisted with the national mission to cultivate the land and resources of the nation's frontiers. *The Fruits of Empire* borrows methodologies from Environmental History to show how the cultivation of fruit participated in the cultivation of empire in the late-nineteenth century.

In studying the various dimensions of fruit, this research considers the many "social lives" of food. Arjun Appadurai discusses this idea in his book, *The Social Life of Things*, explaining that commodities possess many lives and undergo many phases throughout the process of commoditization.<sup>34</sup> To understand the social lives of a commodity like food, one must analyze the entire life cycle of this material object through its exchange, distribution, consumption, and representation. This approach to material objects is embraced by scholars in the discipline of Material Culture who study "things" and how they transmit ideas about those who fabricated, purchased, commissioned, or used them. By looking expansively at fruit in the field, market, home, and world's fair—as well as in paintings, silverware, crate labels, and ephemeral objects—this project honors the scholarship of Jules Prown, James Deetz, and other Material Culture theorists who examine the social lives of everyday objects.<sup>35</sup> While the

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<sup>33</sup> Philip J. Pauly, *Fruits and Plains: The Horticultural Transformation of America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008); Frieda Knobloch, *Culture of Wilderness: Agriculture as Colonization in the American West* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

<sup>34</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities of Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge: Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology, 1988).

<sup>35</sup> Jules David Prown, "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method," *Winterthur* 17.1 (Spring 1982): 1-19; James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: The Archaeology of Early American Life* (Garden City: Anchor Press/Double Day, 1996). Other leaders of the

fine arts and everyday objects are often separated from the fine arts in Art Historical scholarship, *The Fruits of Empire* reunites the two with the understanding that “higher” forms of art produced by fruit painters were influenced by the popular vernacular of fruit that permeated mainstream culture. The two, consequently, should not be divorced from one another since they lived, breathed, and interacted in the same social space. The knowledge that food itself is a representation with formal qualities shaped by the way it is grown, prepared, and consumed also enhances the conversation on food and visual culture. This project relies on theories from the Material Culture discipline to study the many social lives of fruit from its cultivation in the soil to its representation on the canvas.

While *The Fruits of Empire* examines a wide spectrum of objects and images, it is truly still-life paintings of fruit that form the basis of this dissertation. This research is an outgrowth of scholarship by art historians such as William Gerdts, Wolfgang Born, Charles Sterling, and Alfred Frankenstein: the pioneers of still-life studies in North America. The prolific writings of William Gerdts have been especially foundational to the still-life discipline, providing the most comprehensive and meticulous archive of fruit painters in the country.<sup>36</sup> The scholarship of Norman Bryson has built upon this bedrock and taken a semiotic approach to still-life painting by extracting meaning from the signs

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Material Culture discipline include Simon Bronner, Henry Glassie, and Thomas Schlereth as identified by Jules Prown, *Mind in Matter*, p. 16.

<sup>36</sup> Wolfgang Born, *Still-Life Painting in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947); Alfred V. Frankenstein, *After the Hunt: William Harnett and Other American Still Life Painters 1870-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953); William H. Gerdts, *Art Across America: Two Centuries of Regional Painting 1710-1920* (New York: Abeville Press, 1990); William H. Gerdts, *Painters of the Humble Truth: Masterpieces of American Still Life 1801-1939* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1981); William H. Gerdts, “The Influence of Ruskin and Pre-Raphaelitism on American Still-Life Painting,” *American Art Journal* 1.2 (Autumn, 1969): 80-97.

present in the semantic space of a painting.<sup>37</sup> Alexander Nemerov, Nancy Siegel, and Annie Storr have expanded this approach to look at the social history of still-life painting and the ways in which early-American artists depicted food to comment on the discourses of nature, science, and the body.<sup>38</sup> Studies of *trompe l'oeil* painting by David Lubin, Judith Barter, Wendy Bellion and Martha Evans have also made an important mark on the field by examining how illusion and visual deception in still-life painting reflects the politics of race, gender, and class conflict.<sup>39</sup> *The Fruits of Empire* seeks to continue this trajectory in Art History by illustrating how artists used pictures of food to address the social conditions around them.

While scholarship on American still-life painting has been clearly influential on this project, research in the area of Dutch Art History has been equally informative.<sup>40</sup> The text *Still Life and Trade in the Dutch Golden Age* by Julie Berger Hochstrasser has provided an important research model for *The Fruits of Empire*. Hochstrasser's objective is to investigate the social histories of objects in Dutch still-life pictures: a rich topic since these objects belonged to a lively consumer market due to the wildly successful

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<sup>37</sup> Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

<sup>38</sup> Alexander Nemerov, *The Body of Raphaelle Peale: Still Life and Selfhood: 1812-1824*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Nancy Siegel, "Cooking Up American Politics," *Gastronomica* 8.3 (2008): 53-61; Annie V. F. Storr, "Raphaelle Peale's 'Strawberries, Nuts, and c.' A Riddle of Enlightened Science," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 21.1 (1995): 24-34, 73-74.

<sup>39</sup> Judith Barter, "True to the Senses and False in its Essence: Still Life and Tromp L'oeil Painting in Victorian America" in *Objects of Desire: Victorian Art at the Art Institute of Chicago* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2005); Wendy Bellion, *Citizen Spectator: Art, Illusion, and Visual Perception in Early National America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Martha Evans, *Claude Raguet Hirst: Transforming the American Still Life* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 2004); David Lubin, "Masculinity, Nostalgia, Trompe L'oeil in Still-Life Paintings of William Harnett," *Picturing a Nation: Art and Social Change* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

<sup>40</sup> Julie Berger Hochstrasser, *Still Life and Trade in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

Dutch trade industry. Hochstrasser reveals how many of the objects illustrated in Dutch still lifes were produced abroad, reflecting the country's global power and dominance in trade. Several of the products visible in Dutch still lifes were also produced by the labor of African slaves, another commodity within the Trans-Atlantic trade network of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Hochstrasser explores how still-life artists depicted or disguised the slave labor underwriting many of the objects present in these paintings, raising the question: who consumes what and at whose expense? *The Fruits of Empire* poses this same question in the context of North American still-life pictures, a fruitful comparison since American still-life painters were heavily influenced by Dutch still-life artists. In following this line of inquiry, this dissertation seeks to uncover the social politics of food that produced meaning for American artists and viewers.

### **Chapter Summaries**

The following chapters unravel the cultural meanings embedded in still-life representations by focusing on four fruit case studies including still-life depictions of grapes, oranges, watermelons, and bananas. The first chapter on grapes required the most immediate attention because grapes, in the wide range of fruits, appear most frequently in American still-life representation. This is not surprising given that grape growing flourished in America after the Civil War, increasing the production of grape pictures, grape premiums, and viticultural manuals that encouraged Northern and Southern farmers to collaborate in the construction of a grape growing industry. The national stakes of cultivating an American grape business were visible in world's fair exhibits and still-life paintings that specifically paid tribute to the cultivation of Spanish Mission grapevines in California. Locating these images in the greater history of Spanish Missionization

reveals how Americans romanticized the Spanish colonial period in the American West and used grapes to insert North America into the legacy of Spanish exploration. This chapter charts the visual history of grapes in the late-nineteenth century to understand how the cultivation and representation of this fruit supported a larger national agenda to unify and expand the country.

The second chapter on representations of oranges transports readers from the American West to the American South, showing how fruit in America's southern frontiers subscribed to a similar imperial agenda. This chapter was inspired by the strange discovery that Northerners, and not Southerners, spearheaded the citrus industry in the South. Northern entrepreneurs, in fact, monopolized the cultivation of Southern oranges, moving south after the Civil War to exploit the region's economic potential. Northerners cleverly understood how cultivating oranges could help cultivate influence and money in the greater American South. Citrus farming, in this sense, was a political strategy to transform the South's plantation economy and protect Northern interests in American Reconstruction. To draw Northerners southward, advertisements, tourist brochures, and horticultural manuals displayed the economic promise of fruit industries in Florida. Still-life paintings of oranges by Martin Johnson Heade, William Aiken Walker, and Harriet Beecher Stowe also portrayed an attractive view of Florida citrus farming. These images stitched together, however, failed to visualize the significant role that African-American freedmen played in the Florida orange industry after the Civil War. By rebuilding the political context for citrus cultivation, this chapter reinforces how growing and painting fruit in the late-nineteenth century held political consequences for the expansion and reconstruction of the United States.

In building evidence for the strong relationship between fruit and the discourses of race and empire, these first two chapters pave the way for the third chapter that focuses more deeply on the racial politics of watermelon. This chapter seemed the most pressing to write since the racial stereotypes associated with watermelon were the subject of debate while writing this text. In October of 2014, the *Boston Herald* published a cartoon of a White House intruder asking President Barack Obama who brushes his teeth, “Have you tried the new watermelon flavored toothpaste?”<sup>41</sup> By posing this question about watermelon toothpaste to the Black president, Holbert’s cartoon resurrected a racial stereotype rooted in a long and disturbing history of racism towards African Americans. This racial trope began in the mid- and late-nineteenth century when many Americans drew upon the watermelon’s association with indulgence and intemperance to portray Black people as possessing the same qualities. The watermelon stereotype was reproduced in a number of still-life paintings, trade cards, silverware designs, minstrel poems, and song sheets that continued to link watermelon to the perceived savagery of African-American people. Depictions of African Americans stealing watermelons from unguarded patches also reflected wider debates about Black access and violence in society. This chapter analyzes the visual culture of watermelons to understand the racial narratives underlining this charged fruit.

The imperial politics of fruit do not disappear at the turn of the century, which is made clear in the fourth chapter on the visual culture of bananas. No analysis on the fruits of American empire would be complete without an investigation of bananas, a food that explicitly relates to the cultivation of land and power. Still-life depictions in North

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<sup>41</sup> This is one of several cartoons that applied the watermelon stereotype to President Obama. Another famous example displays the White House Lawn during Obama’s term over Easter with rows of watermelon in place of Easter eggs.

America documented this “new” and exotic fruit in the late-nineteenth century, when several entrepreneurs capitalized on advancements in refrigeration and transportation technologies to make the fruit more accessible to American consumers. The founding of the United Fruit Company in 1899 ushered in a new era in banana cultivation by systematizing the fruit’s production on large-scale, corporate-controlled plantations within Central America and the Caribbean. The company’s drive to control and exploit banana production in these regions culminated in the 1950s when the United Fruit Company orchestrated a coup to overthrow the Guatemalan government to remove banana lands from local control. The ongoing intervention of North Americans in Latin-American policy is a subject that contemporary artists address today in their depictions of bananas, including Moisés Barrios who paints images of toy soldiers firing guns on top of bananas that point to the murky role of the United Fruit Company in Central America. Refracted through the lens of historic and contemporary art, this fourth chapter investigates the nefarious relationship between bananas, land, and empire across nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries.

Because the cultivation and representation of fruit in America so closely relates to the colonization of land, this study on the fruits of empire naturally focuses on the tropical frontiers where fruit was produced. This project, consequently, reorients the American art history canon centered on Northeastern art to images and artists in the American South, West, and broader Americas that have typically been marginalized in art historical scholarship. This project rediscovers the careers of several artists as a result of this new shift in perspective. *The Fruits of Empire* also widens the scope of still-life studies by looking beyond paintings to the visual culture of food in cookbooks, crate

labels, trade cards, and silverware. Another goal of this project is to discuss the labor and preparation of fruit, which is often rendered invisible in still-life representations.

Discussing the role of Chinese grape pickers, African-American orange farmers, and Guatemalan banana growers reveals how fruit imagery supported, or challenged, the national mission to expand the country's physical and racial borders. This project, as a result, forges new pathways between the disciplines of Art History, Visual Culture, American Studies, Food Studies, and Environmental History to uncover the social politics of food in American art.

Given the importance of food and its representation to national construction, a number of museums and scholars in recent years have investigated the social, cultural, and pictorial lives of food. In 2013, the Art Institute of Chicago published a groundbreaking text and exhibition on *Art and Appetite: American Painting, Cuisine, and Culture*. This survey of food in American art complements the long line of exhibitions recently devoted to food in American art at the Sheldon Museum of Art (2011), Smart Museum of Art (2012), Houston Center for Photography (2013), San Jose Museum of Art (2013), and the Philadelphia Museum of Art (2015).<sup>42</sup> Scholars such as Erica Hannickel, Guy Jordan, Nancy Siegel, Pamela Simpson, and Katharina Vester also reflect a new generation of scholars focused on the visual culture of art and drink in America.<sup>43</sup> Their

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<sup>42</sup> Sheldon Art Museum, "Poetical Fire: Three Centuries of Still Life"; Smart Museum, "Feast: Radical Hospitality in Contemporary Art"; Houston Center for Photography, "Food Contemporary Photography and the Way We Eat"; San Jose Museum of Art, "Around the Table: Food, Creativity, Community"; Philadelphia Museum of Art, "Audubon to Warhol: The Art of American Still Life."

<sup>43</sup> Erica Hannickel, *Empire of Vines: Wine Culture in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); Guy Jordan, *The Aesthetics of Intoxication in American Art and Culture*. Dissertation. (College Park: University of Maryland, 2007); Nancy Siegel, *Political Appetites: Revolution, Taste, and Culinary Activism in the Early Republic* (forthcoming); Pamela Simpson, *Corn Palaces and Butter Queens: A History of Crop Art and Dairy Sculpture*



research reinforces how food and its representation is a prominent site for the construction of race, gender, and other discourses of identity. (FIG. 3) Several contemporary artists in America address this topic as well, including Kara Walker who created a giant sugar-coated ceramic mammy sculpture at the Domino Sugar Factory in 2014, drawing from America's culinary histories to discuss issues of race and identity.<sup>44</sup> These artworks, exhibitions, and texts, in combination with the recent swell of Food Studies programs across the country, are creating a lively trajectory for the study of art and food.

*The Fruits of Empire* marks another step forward in this national project by examining the social meanings inherent in nineteenth-century representations of fruit. The overarching goal of this research is to demonstrate how representations of fruit are not as innocuous or straightforward as they seem. Fruit and its representation belong to a dark and complicated history over the fight for land, money, and power that often occurred at the expense of laborers and people of color. The representation of food was especially generative ground for artists in the late-nineteenth century because it was at this cultural moment when Americans were reorganizing society to accommodate a new system of labor that directly impacted the production of food. Visual representations of grapes, oranges, watermelons, and bananas reinforce this point and demonstrate the sheer importance of food to discussions centering on race, land, and power. Still-life representations of fruit also bore profound meaning on American identity and character in

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(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012); and Katharina Vester, *A Taste of Power: Food and American Identities* (forthcoming with the University of California Press).

<sup>44</sup> Walker's work, *A Subtlety*, is a commentary on the history of the sugar industry, which was built on the backs of African and African-American slave laborers. Strategically placed in the Domino Sugar Factory—a historic site for the refinement of raw sugar into white, processed material—Walker's sculpture questions the value that American society places on white objects and people and the role of African-American women in the food and domestic industries.

a society strongly believed in the tenet, you are what you eat. American artists keenly understood how food was not merely a source of nourishment but an object of symbolic value that participates in the construction of national identity. The *Fruits of Empire* investigates the cultural and visual histories of fruit to discover the deep connection that American artists and growers forged between art and food.

## Chapter One

### Purple Globes and Glories: Grapes and the Construction of an American Empire

In his 1864 book, *The Cultivation of the Native Grape*, horticulturist George Husmann announced “Americans have grape on the brain!”<sup>45</sup> Husmann was right. Between 1865 and 1900, grape cultivation skyrocketed in America. Helped by the strengthening economy and growing desire to stimulate America’s agricultural production after the Civil War, the cultivation of grapes profoundly increased in the late-nineteenth century. The grape craze was evident by the dozens of viticultural manuals published during and after the Civil War and the emergence of grape-growing associations throughout the country. Not limited to horticulturists, artists too caught grape fever and devoted entire pictures to grapes grown in America. While grapes offered artists the opportunity to flaunt their facility in portraying the fruit’s bursting skins and plump figure, representations of grapes also engaged artists and viewers in complex ideas about land, labor, race, and taste that all contributed to the formation of the nation. Representations of grapes in world’s fair exhibitions and magazine illustrations provoked similar conversations in the late-nineteenth century that pressed upon the progress and political direction of the country. The material culture of grapes, therefore, provides an important starting point for uncovering the social meanings behind fruit and its representation.

Grapes were especially useful to artists and politicians during the Civil War when the blood-red fruit was used for portraying an embattled and divided country. The installation of picturesque vineyards and grape premiums, however, were conversely used

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<sup>45</sup>Husmann, *American Grape Growing and Wine Making* (New York: Orange Judd Company, 1880), 143.

to promote peace and reunion by rallying farmers from the East, West, North, and South around the mission to build an American grape growing enterprise. These goals translated into exhibitions of the fruit at the Philadelphia Centennial and Columbian Exposition, where representations of grapes plotted America as one of the world's most powerful grape-growing empires. This point was reiterated in the still-life paintings of grapes by California artists Samuel Marsden Brookes and Edwin Deakin, who painted still lifes of Spanish Mission grapes to commemorate the cultivation of land and power in the American West. These paintings, however, do not depict the racial politics and brutal conditions of labor that characterized California grape culture. The role of women grape growers is also clouded by paintings and illustrations that exclusively show male grape laborers. By digging deeper beneath the surface of grape imagery, this chapter will uncover how the cultivation of grapes in soil and paint supported the construction of an American empire.

### **The Grapes of Wrath and Reunion**

Like tea or cotton which played a role in some of the nation's most historic battles, grapes also participated in national politics and were used by poets, illustrators, and artists to comment on the state of the nation. Grapes were particularly charged with meaning during the Civil War when Julia Ward Howe famously referenced the fruit in her 1861 song, "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." Played to the tune of "John Brown's Body," a Union marching song about the abolitionist's death, Howe's lyrics began,

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord:  
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;  
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword:  
His truth is marching on.

In the very first stanza of this song, grapes are used to portray an angry God on Judgment Day who tramples the fruits where “the grapes of wrath are stored.” Howe appropriated this phrase from the Bible’s Book of Revelation to symbolize God’s fury and intent to punish Confederate soldiers for rebelling against the Union. Imagery of trampled grapes produced a powerful metaphor for the wine-red wounds and splattered blood of soldiers on American battlefields. The association of grapes with grapeshot guns—weapons with bullets that formed the shape of grape clusters—more generally recalled imagery of death and punishment. Grapes were also linked to the “grapevine telegraph” at this time, which described vine-like telegraph wires strung from tree to tree across Civil-War battlefields for communication between soldiers. In many ways, Americans drew upon the physical qualities of grapes during the Civil War to express darker themes about death and punishment.

(FIG. 4) Images of grapes on Civil-War envelopes also expressed opinions about the divided nation. Civil-War envelopes widely circulated the North between 1861 and 1865, often displaying satirical illustrations highlighting the South’s incompetence or immorality. Envelopes with grape illustrations followed suit by showing a fox identified as Jefferson Davis attempting to feast on a cluster of “Washington grapes.” In two illustrations, the allegorical fox stares longingly at the Washington grapevine, unable to reach its delicious fruits. One illustration shows bayonets lining the wall below the vine, reinforcing the North’s defense of Washington—and the fruits of power—from Southern leaders. (FIG. 5) A poem on the envelope describes Davis’ defeat:

Those grapes up there which look so fine,  
Which I so lately thought were mine,—  
Since they are now beyond my power,  
I’ll “let alone,”—I GUESS THEY’RE SOUR.”

The envelope's illustrator borrows Aesop's fable "The Fox and the Grapes" to demonstrate how Washington, D.C. was out of reach to Confederate powers, and thereby "sour grapes" to leaders like Davis. Such illustrations contributed to the grape's legacy in representing national disunion.

Paradoxical to the grape narratives on Civil-War envelopes and in poems, authors and horticulturists used grapes to paint a portrait of national peace and reunion. An 1863 article in *The Country Gentleman*, for instance, tells a story of two fallen soldiers, one Northern and one Southern, who bonded over grapes during the battle at Antietam. "In talking with one [Southern soldier] who fell near me," the Northern soldier recounts, "I discovered that he too was interested in horticulture and there seemed at once a bond of sympathy between us."<sup>46</sup> The Northerner learns that his fallen enemy has a vineyard in Macon, Georgia:

...on which it was his pride to collect all the [grape] varieties of note he could get. He made me promise that as soon as possible after the war shall be over, if we both live through it, I should go down and spend a month with him...I promised to try to get him a few cuttings of the newer kinds of grapes to take with him when he is exchanged.<sup>47</sup>

*The Country Gentleman* presents a tender story about Northern and Southern adversaries uniting over grapes. The implications of this exchange were so profound that the Northern soldier says: "I could not help noticing the different effect our little garden talk had on the squad of our comrades about us, beyond any other topic of conversation that had ever been introduced since I have been in the hospital."<sup>48</sup> Due to the soldiers' shared interest in grapes, this story in *The Country Gentleman* suggests that horticulture could

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<sup>46</sup> "Horticulture and War" *Country Gentleman* (March 19, 1863), 195.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

assist in healing the emotional wounds formed between Northerners and Southerners during the war.

Horticulturists too believed that grape growing could restore peace and reunion to the country. In the introduction of his book *The Grape Culturist* from 1865, author George Husmann declared that “Whether North or South, East or West, or the Atlantic or Pacific Coast. We offer you the hand of friendship...[and] ask your assistance for a universal enterprise [in grape cultivation].”<sup>49</sup> By inviting farmers from every region to help build a national grape industry, Husmann expected that grapes would stimulate the country’s agricultural economy and help restore peace to the larger Union. Husmann explicitly proclaimed in his introduction: “In union is strength!”<sup>50</sup> Viticultural manuals that discussed the union between seeds, grapes, and vines for the improved growth of the fruit might have spoken more symbolically of national union and its importance to the growth of America. Manuals that described the ability of grapes to grow well under unfavorable conditions might have also symbolized the heartiness of the American people and their ability to persevere after years of unrest. Grapes, as a result, were not merely dessert fruits reserved for special occasions,<sup>51</sup> but powerful symbols that informed and reflected attitudes about the country’s political condition.

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<sup>49</sup> George Husmann, *The Grape Culturist: A Monthly Journal Devoted to Grape Culture and Wine Making* (St. Louis: Levison and Blythe Printers, 1870): 13.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Fruits in the antebellum period were not considered mainstay foods but prized desserts as a result of their difficulty to grow and preserve over long periods of time. For a short discussion on fruits as imported indulgences and expensive luxury items, see Brandon K. Ruud’s essay, “Truth to Nature: Still Life, Exoticism, and Gender,” *Poetical Fire: Three Centuries of Still Lifes* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska and the Sheldon Museum of Art, 2011), 22 and Susan Williams, *Savory Suppers and Fashionable Feasts: Dining in Victorian America* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996), 82, 85.

Politician Horace Greeley understood how grapes could assist in uniting American farmers after the Civil War. (FIG. 6) Greeley, a seminal figure in the Republican Party and editor of *The New York Tribune*, attempted to unite the country's farmers by offering a record-breaking \$100 grape premium to the best table-grape produced by an American farmer. Greeley advertised the premium in newspapers and agricultural periodicals in 1864 and formed a committee entitled "The Fruit Department of the American Institute" to evaluate the grape submissions.<sup>52</sup> It is no coincidence that Greeley created the grape premium during the last years of the Civil War when the nation was ripping at the seams. Greeley believed that a national call for grapes would help unite Northern and Southern agriculturalists and renew important commercial ties between the North and South.<sup>53</sup> The committee's search for an egalitarian grape that could be cultivated "under varying circumstances [and climates] throughout the country" represented this goal for unity.<sup>54</sup> When the competition closed in 1866, the committee awarded Greeley's premium to the Concord grape from Boston, Massachusetts. While Northern vintners applauded the election of the Concord grape and called it "the grape for the millions," a number of Southern horticulturists complained that Greeley's award to the Boston grape was biased towards "Northern sections...where

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<sup>52</sup> The committee was appointed by Greeley in partnership with the Horticultural Association of the American Institute. The committee looked for grapes based on the healthiness, hardiness, and productivity of the grape's vine and foliage. "Greeley Prize on Grapes," *The Horticulturist, and Journal of Rural Art and Rural Taste* (New York: George and F.W. Woodward, 1864), 341-342; James Parton, *The Life of Horace Greeley* (Boston: Fields, Osgood, and Co., 1869), 489.

<sup>53</sup> Politicians were also eager to unite the agricultural industries of the North and South to compete with the quickly growing fruit empire of the American West.

<sup>54</sup> "Greeley Prize on Grapes," *The Horticulturist*, 341.



the grape ripened earliest.”<sup>55</sup> Greeley’s grape premium is a perfect example of how grapes carried regional and national allegiances.<sup>56</sup>

Lithography firm Currier and Ives capitalized on the popularity of grape premiums after the Civil War by distributing a number of still-life prints on this very subject. (FIG. 7) *First Premium Grapes* is one example that shows a “royal cluster” of grapes worthy of a king’s vineyard.<sup>57</sup> The grapes in *First Premium* look healthy and robust, showing berries that stretch into every direction of the picture plane. The illustrator conveyed the plumpness of each grape by outlining every berry with heavy shadows. Framed by leaves that release down the sides of the fruit like flowing hair, this grape cluster forms a picture-perfect portrait of American fruit. Idealized still lifes displaying grape premiums suggest that America possessed a vibrant agricultural program characterized by fruit prizes, fairs, and contests. Perhaps it is no coincidence that Currier and Ives produced still lifes of grape premiums since Nathaniel Currier was close friends with Horace Greeley, who famously sponsored the 1864 grape premium.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Greeley too was unsatisfied with the awarded Concord grape, saying “all my money did, was to advertise a grape already known; thus improvement was checked—not stimulated. I am a little discouraged by the result, and do not propose to offer another bank note for a plate of common grapes.” Other committee members agreed that the premium should have gone to grapes of “a more refined character.” *Gardeners Monthly and Horticultural Advertisement* XI (Philadelphia: Brinckloe and Marot, 1869), 120; U.P. Hendrick, *The Grapes of New York* (Albany: J.P. Lyon Co., 1908), 220.

<sup>56</sup> Not limited to the North and South, grape cultivation also inspired lively debates in the West in Ohio, a center for grape growing in the antebellum period. For more information on Ohio viticulture, consult: “A Fortune in Fruit: Nicholas Longworth and Grape Speculation in Antebellum Ohio,” *American Studies* 51 (Spring/Summer 2010): 89-108; Shana Klein, “Cultivating Fruit and Equality in the Still-Life Paintings of Robert Duncanson,” *American Art* 29.2 (Summer 2015).

<sup>57</sup> Other prints on this subject by Currier and Ives include: *American Prize Fruit*, *American Prize Fruit with Basket*, and *Premium Fruit* all in the collection of the Library of Congress.

<sup>58</sup> Greeley knew Nathaniel Currier well and often visited Currier’s shop in Manhattan, which was located just a few blocks away from the building that published Greeley’s newspaper, *The New York Tribune*. Bryan Le Beau, *Currier and Ives: America Imagined* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 19.

Still-life prints of grape premiums, therefore, were not merely decorative objects for the dining room, but models of agricultural wealth and unity that Americans could aspire to.

### **Grape Empire: The Quest for Viticultural Supremacy at the Philadelphia Centennial**

(FIG. 8) In comparison to Currier and Ives which distributed inexpensive still-life prints of grapes to the masses, Baltimore artist Andrew John Henry depicted more individualized portraits of grapes for an elite circle of patrons such as art collector William Walters.<sup>59</sup> Way, in fact, was one of the most famous grape painters in the nineteenth century, eliciting praise from critics and patrons who admired the “purple glories” and “globes” he depicted outdoors. (FIG. 9) Way did not depict just any grape, but specific grape varieties, a fact evident in a record from the National Academy of Design that shows the wide range of grapes he depicted between 1861 and 1885.<sup>60</sup> Way even advised other artists on what grape varieties to paint, writing in the *Art Amateur* that “the black Damascus, Gros Colmo de Canto, Flamme de Tokay...and Catawba grapes go well together,” while “Hamburgs will not go well with Muscats, nor black Damascus with Calabrian raisin” in still-life paintings. For the most dynamic composition, Way believed that “the lightest bunches of the Flamme de Tokay will unite harmoniously with

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<sup>59</sup> Jack Kirby, “Grapes from Mr. Walters Greenhouse” *The Bulletin of the Walters Art Gallery* 3 (Jan. 1951). Walters was so enamored with Way’s grape paintings that he allegedly kept this work after giving away most of his collection. This was learned in conversation with Lisa Strong, Manager of Curatorial Affairs, Corcoran.

<sup>60</sup> Maria K. Naylor, *The National Academy of Design Exhibition Record* v.2 (New York: Kennedy Galleries, 1973), 999. Critics praised his “skill in differentiating between different [grape] varieties.” “Obituary for Andrew John Henry Way” in the *Baltimore Sun* in the J. Hall Pleasants Papers at the Maryland Historical Society.

the ripest Muscat or the golden Hamburg.”<sup>61</sup> In selecting and mixing specific grape varieties in his paintings, Way approached still lifes of grapes like a vintner trying to achieve the best combination of grape colors and types. His depiction of swollen grapes on the cusp of bursting match the standards of grape beauty set by vintners in horticultural manuals.<sup>62</sup> At a time when American vintners were experimenting with different grape varieties, Way’s paintings reflect the nation’s growing investment in cultivating a grape industry.

Way’s depiction of European grape varieties, however, conflicted with a number of horticulturists who encouraged the cultivation of uniquely “American” grapes. Vintner Andrew Fuller argued that “it is only since foreign varieties have been discarded for our hitherto neglected native sorts, that vine culture has become established as a branch of American industry.”<sup>63</sup> Andrew Jackson Downing also pushed American growers to cultivate native grapes, advising horticulturists to “raise two or three new generations [of grapes] in the American soil and climate. They will then get American *constitutions*—which no grafting, pruning, training, or manuring will give them.”<sup>64</sup> Fruit growers established grapes with “American constitutions” by hybridizing European

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<sup>61</sup> Way, “Fruit-Painting in Oils, Grapes VI,” 119.

<sup>62</sup> Several critics commented on Way’s ability to capture swollen and inflated grapes that look like they “would easily burst if pressed.” He created the appearance of bursting grapes by flecking the top of each grape with a dab of white paint that gives the impression of grapes expanding towards a light source. Way might have focused on this quality in his paintings upon learning from viticultural manuals like *The Grape Culturist* that the most beautiful grapes are “a large and compact bunch, [with] thin skin but sufficiently tough to prevent bursting.” Way could have also read in George Husmann’s manuals that the ideal grapes have “skins distended almost till bursting.” These standards of grape beauty are exactly what Way labored to show in his still lifes. J. Hall Pleasants Papers, Maryland Historical Society, p. 58; Husmann, *The Grape Culturist*, 215, 33.

<sup>63</sup> Andrew Samuel Fuller, *The Grape Culturist: A Treatise on the Cultivation of the Native Grape* (New York: Davies and Kent, 1864), 8.

<sup>64</sup> A.J. Downing, “Notes on Foreign Grapes in the United States” *The Horticulturist and Journal of Rural Art and Rural Taste* 12 (1851), 91.

grapes, assigned them indigenous American names,<sup>65</sup> and inserting them into a classification system of American fruits.<sup>66</sup> It is meaningful that horticulturists devised all of these methods to Americanize European grapes at a time when waves of European immigrants flooded America. The concern for European immigration echoed concerns in horticultural manuals that addressed the “migration” and “naturalization” of foreign grapes on American soil and the cultivation of new “generations” and “bloodlines” of grapes.<sup>67</sup> Repeated descriptions of grapes as purple “globes” and “globules” might have reinforced the global trade of grapes at this time.<sup>68</sup> In a society so anxious about the naturalization of foreigners, it is no surprise that ideas about national identity and citizenship even extended to fruit.

Despite the call for a uniquely indigenous grape in America, Andrew John Henry Way submitted two paintings of European-born Hamburg grapes to the Philadelphia

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<sup>65</sup> John Adlum, for instance, renamed the Tokay grape he planted in Washington, D.C. to the “Catawba” grape in homage of the Catawba River and Catawba Native American tribe in North Carolina. Leon Adams, *The Wines of America*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1985), 72.

<sup>66</sup> Naturalist George Perkins Marsh, however, ridiculed the desire to nativize European grapes in America, disparaging vintners who refused to “admit of the supposition that [grape varieties] were all introduced by European colonists.” *Man and Nature or Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action* (New York John Trow and Co., 1864). 55-56.

<sup>67</sup> For a discussion on the racialization of grapes and cultivation of new “bloodlines” and “generations,” see Erica Hannickel, *Empire of Vines: Wine Culture in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 139-143. In Cincinnati, Edward Mansfield explicitly promoted the “migration” and “naturalization” of fruits on American soil, saying “This diffusion and naturalization of plants, native to one land, in other lands, is evidence that man himself has emigrated, and that in that colonization he has become improved and civilized. It is remarkable how completely parallel is the case of the Vegetable race, with the Human Race, in this mode of improvement...It is only when communities advanced in intelligence, have great commerce—and by industry have accumulated the mean of gratifying their tastes, that they have transplanted the members of the vegetable kingdom,—naturalized them in new soil, and collected in great gardens vast numbers and varieties. Thus the migration and improvement of plant becomes conclusive evidence of the migration and improvement of man.” *Address Delivered before the Horticultural Society* (Cincinnati: Wright, Ferris, and Co., October 4, 1850), 3-4, in the Pamphlets Collection of the Cincinnati Museum Center, reference number 635 M287.

<sup>68</sup> A critic wrote “one cannot but believe the little *globules* would easily burst if pressed,” in regards to Way’s grape painting. Ex-Lieutenant Governor C.C. Cox also wrote a poem about Way’s still lifes of grapes, saying “you may pluck off a handful of *globes*...” Both excerpts from the Pleasants Papers at the Maryland Historical Society, p. 58 and 32.

Centennial in 1876.<sup>69</sup> Hamburgs were well known in the nineteenth century for constituting the largest grapevine in history at England's Hampton Court.<sup>70</sup> (FIG. 10) Reaching 120 feet in length, and producing 600 pounds of grapes per year, the Hampton grapevine won several prizes when displayed at world's fairs in Paris and in New Orleans. (FIG. 11) Since Way's paintings of Hamburg grapes are now lost, a picture of *Prize "Black Hamburg" Grapes* by Currier and Ives provides an alternate portrait of the Hampton vine. This print shows a hefty cluster of Hamburg grapes hanging from a nail against a wooden wall, sharing a strong resemblance with *First Premium Grapes* also printed by Currier and Ives. Illustrators followed a similar format in their still-life representations for Currier and Ives to capture the robustness of grapes rather than focusing on the unique characteristics that distinguished one grape variety from another. The size of the Hamburg grape would have been a primary concern for illustrators and artists like Way since Hamburg grapevines were famously known for their record-breaking width and length. Naturally, Way would have wanted to depict the world's greatest grape for the Philadelphia Centennial, which intended to illustrate the world's greatest accomplishments.

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<sup>69</sup> These paintings are lost today, but scholars know that Way's still lifes won a medal of excellence in the still-life category and was judged by a committee of three people according to the "The Dead Artist," *Baltimore Sun* (Feb. 9, 1888); William Gerdtz and Russell Burke, *American Still Life Painting*, (New York: First Edition, 1971), 72. There is, however, conflicting information in the *U.S. Centennial Commission, International Exhibition Official Catalogue Department of Art 4<sup>th</sup> edition* that states Way exhibited "Bunch of Muscat Grapes and Damascus Grapes" rather than "Hamburg Grapes" at the Philadelphia Centennial, (Philadelphia, John R. Nagle and Co. 1876), 24.

<sup>70</sup> The Black Hamburg grapevine at Hampton Court Palace in Oxfordshire, England, was planted in 1769. The Hampton Court grapevine was originally planted by landscape architect Lancelot Brown for King George III and Queen Charlotte at their royal court in Hampton, England. Fuller, 230.

(FIG) Way, however, could not have predicted that the Hamburg grape would actually be overthrown by another record-breaking grapevine at the Philadelphia Centennial: the Spanish Mission Grapevine from Santa Barbara, California. (FIG. 12) This grapevine was aptly nicknamed “La Parra Grande,” or “the large vine,” for its towering height of eight feet and wide diameter of 14 inches.<sup>71</sup> The Mammoth grapevine was so massive that it had to be cut up, divided into sections, and then boxed for shipment to Philadelphia.<sup>72</sup> Known as “the greatest horticultural prodigy in the world” and a “celebrity of Spanish California,” the Mammoth Mission grapevine was a huge attraction in the Agricultural Hall at the Philadelphia Centennial.<sup>73</sup> The vine’s thick, arborous trunk was certainly impressive, stretching its long limbs into the corners of the pergola. Although the Mammoth Mission grapevine no longer bore fruit, visitors could buy wine produced in California from an adjacent station in the Agricultural Hall. The display of the Mammoth Mission grapevine flaunted the viticultural success of California and confirmed the American West’s victory over England’s grapevine at Hampton Court.<sup>74</sup>

Michael Sarver, owner of the Mammoth Mission grapevine in 1876, relished the fact that his vine outgrew the one at Hampton Court. The Hampton Court vine would have looked shrunken next to the Mission grapevine for the British plant “only equals in

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<sup>71</sup> Michael Sarver, *The History and Legend of the Mammoth Grapevine*, (Canton: McGregor and Son, 1876).

<sup>72</sup> “California’s Centennial Grape-vine” *American Stationer* (1875), 27.

<sup>73</sup> Sarver, 16.

<sup>74</sup> At least one writer, however, criticized the California wine exhibit in 1889, claiming “it looked like nectar fit for the gods; but it was coarse and earthy in taste and full of disagreeable sediment. The exhibit did not have the sanction of the State, and was a mere commercial venture by the proprietor of some restaurant. It did much to damage the reputation of California wines in the East, and it took nearly ten years to remove the bad impression created by that villainous travesty.” Edward Roberts, “California Wine- Making” *Harper’s Weekly* (Mar. 9, 1889): 197.

diameter, one of the main branches” belonging to the Mission vine.<sup>75</sup> Triumphant over the Hamburg grape—the very grape that Way pictured in a neighboring building at the Centennial—symbolized the larger rivalry between international regions for the title of viticultural supremacy. Nineteenth-century Chef James Parkinson explained the importance of displaying American-produced wines at the Centennial, saying:

If the Centennial World’s Fair should be the means of impressing the American people with the capabilities of our country to make excellent native wines...and so lessening the consumption of imported wines...this of itself would be a service to good health and good morals which would a thousand times compensate for all the expenses of the exposition.<sup>76</sup>

For Parkinson, it was worth all the money spent on the Philadelphia Centennial to display American wines to the world. This exhibition specifically flaunted the American West as the new horticultural capital of the world.<sup>77</sup> Set in a booth decorated by agricultural diplomas and certificates, this display of California wines unseated other nations and regions that had long been known as wine producers.<sup>78</sup> Displays of grapes in the Art and Agricultural buildings at the Philadelphia Centennial were thus in dialogue with one another, participating in the greater competition for viticultural dominance.

The Mission grapevine at the Philadelphia Centennial not only symbolized California’s supremacy in American viticulture, but also White America’s ascendancy in Spanish California. This is evident upon analyzing the mythology of Santa Barbara’s Mammoth Mission grapevine, which was said to have been planted by a young, beautiful

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<sup>75</sup> Sarver, 7.

<sup>76</sup> James W. Parkinson, “American Dishes at the Centennial” (Philadelphia: King and Baird, 1874): 16.

<sup>77</sup> An article in the *Pacific Rural Press* agreed that the Mission grapevine was indeed “a means of advertisement for the coast” and “an immense value to the whole state of California.” *Pacific Rural Press* 10.10 (Sept. 4, 1875).

<sup>78</sup> New York previously had been known as the center for grape culture in the early nineteenth century, until it was eclipsed by Cincinnati which rivaled the East in wine production. Hannickel, 126-127.

Spanish woman named Doña Maria Marcelina Feliz.<sup>79</sup> Feliz was given the grapevine by her lover, Don Carlos Jose Dominguez, whose upper-class family disapproved of his relationship with Feliz, a woman of lower rank. Feliz was driven out of town when Don Carlos gave her a grape cutting to be used as a riding switch to take on her journey from Los Angeles to Santa Barbara. Dominguez asked Feliz to plant the cutting at her final destination as “a living memento of their plighted faith.”<sup>80</sup> At the conclusion of her journey, Feliz planted the grapevine in Santa Barbara where it grew and flourished “as no other vine had ever done.”<sup>81</sup> The vine’s success was considered evidence of “the constancy and prosperity of [Feliz’s] absent lover” and a symbol of the couple’s eternal love.<sup>82</sup>

Michael Sarver capitalized on the vine’s popular love story by inviting tourists to visit the “Mammoth Grape Vine Resort” in Montecito, California and publishing photographs of the Mission grapevine for visitors at the Philadelphia Centennial. (FIG. 13) One photograph shows the Mammoth Mission grapevine draped over a trellis that provides shade for a seated woman in a long hacienda dress. Upon seeing the woman’s face more clearly through a stereograph, viewers likely identified the figure as Doña Maria Marcelina Feliz, who Sarver described as “a queen among the maidens of her native place.”<sup>83</sup> “Her complexion, tinged with the warm brunette hue of her face, was clear and bright with the rich tint of health. Her wealth of black hair fell in rippling waves far below her waist; and her large, dark eyes were fringed with silken lashes that matched

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<sup>79</sup> A number of sources also identified this woman as “Dona Maria Marcelina de Dominguez.”

<sup>80</sup> Sarver, 8.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Sarver, 21.



the exquisite penciling of the arched brows above them.”<sup>84</sup> The empty chair in the background of the photograph also called to mind Feliz who mourns the absence of her distant lover. In producing a long shot, profile view of this mythological character, Sarver made viewers feel privy to a private moment in which Feliz gazes off into the horizon, perhaps contemplating the fate of her lover. Sarver carefully crafted his photographs to recount the Spanish legacy of the Mammoth Mission grapevine.

Not simply a tale of love and romance, the history of the Spanish Mission grapevine had greater political implications for the colonization of the American West. Planted in 1775, just one year before America’s formation in 1776, historian Erica Hannickel notes how the grapevine symbolized the beginning of a new American empire and the appropriation of Spanish land for the production of White California.<sup>85</sup> The grapevine’s death also signified the demise of Spanish California, whose citizens supposedly ruined the Mammoth Mission grapevine through neglect and poor treatment. Thomas Hart Hyatt, contributor to *The History and Legend of the Mammoth Mission Grapevine*, said: “There is no question that its ruin was caused by the bad treatment it received from its Spanish owners during the last ten, but more particularly, the last three years. It is very probably that it did not live out half its days.”<sup>86</sup> Only until the grapevine was under White ownership, Hyatt claimed, “the soil was cultivated and enriched, and partially irrigated...”<sup>87</sup> Hyatt’s description of the grapevine’s mistreatment reflected

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Hannickel, 176.

<sup>86</sup> Sarver, 15.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. An article in the *Sacramento Daily Union* also complained that Spanish owners of the Mission grapevine were doing a disservice to the vine by constructing a dance hall over the roots of the grapevine. The article pleads with citizens “who understand the Spanish language” to “make this matter plain to those who claim the ownership or are in charge of ‘the great vine.’” *Sacramento Daily Union* (Apr. 8, 1874), 47.7179.

widespread beliefs that Spanish farmers were lazy and uneducated, harvesting plants that required rescuing from White farmers. Journals such as *The Horticulturist* perpetuated stereotypes about the “lazy Spaniard” and celebrated California’s transference “from the hands of an inert race into the possession of a new and energetic people.”<sup>88</sup> The mythology of the Mammoth Mission grapevine, therefore, affirmed the “rightful” delivery of California from Spanish to White American hands. The legacy of this fruit reinforces how grapes participated in the larger project to advance national expansion.

### **“Westward the Star of Empire Takes Its Way”: Mission Grapes and Westward Expansion**

Since Mission grapevines so powerfully invoked the romance of the Western frontier, it is no surprise that a number of artists in California devoted several still-life paintings to this very grape variety. (FIG. 14) Samuel Marsden Brookes and Edwin Deakin most famously painted California’s Mission grape, travelling throughout Napa Valley to record the Mission and other grape varieties.<sup>89</sup> By painting Mission, Concord, Muscat, Flaming Tokay, and Salt Lake Belles grapes on canvas, Brookes and Deakin mapped California as the nation’s authority on viticulture. The sheer number of grape varieties in their paintings affirmed California’s ability to cultivate grapes of all origins.

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<sup>88</sup> *Official Report of the California State Agricultural Society’s Third Annual Fair*, cited in Hannickel’s *Empire of Vines*, 153. The full quote reads, “A whole new country, falling from the hands of an inert race into the possession of a new and energetic people, has been transformed; the results of energy are here pointed out in most energetic language, and in a spirit that has already swept the lazy Spaniard from the soil.” Helen Hunt Jackson also talked about “the lack of character” of Mexican and Spanish farmers in the article, “Outdoor Industries in Southern California,” *Century Illustrated Magazine* (Oct. 1883), 803.

<sup>89</sup> One article specifically reports how Brookes painted grapes “during a recent visit to Sonoma county.” “Art Notes,” 1872. News clipping from Edwin and Robert Deakin Papers at the Archives of American Art.

(FIG. 15) Brookes also flaunted California's production of sparkling wine by including bottles of Eclipse Champagne in his paintings that were cultivated and advertised by Eclipse founder and friend of the artist, Arpad Haraszthy.<sup>90</sup> In boasting a breadth of grape products in their paintings, Brookes and Deakin solidified California's reputation as the nation's supreme grape grower. Even Congress recognized the economic potential of California grapes, creating a grape-growing commission that sponsored the travel of California vintners overseas to learn about European viticulture.<sup>91</sup> Brookes' and Deakin's still-life paintings merged with the larger national mission to transform California into an American Rhineland.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Brookes and Haraszthy co-founded the Bohemian Club. *Marter, The Grove Encyclopedia of American Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 336; Scott Shields, *Edwin Deakin: California Painter of the Picturesque* (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 2008), 29; Kevin Starr, "Some Early Bohemian Artists," *The Visual Arts in Bohemia: 125 Years of Artistic Creativity in the Bohemian Club* Ed. James Earl Jewell (San Francisco: The Bohemian Club, 1997), 42.

<sup>91</sup> Governor John G. Downey anointed Haraszthy as a "special agricultural commissioner" to visit Europe and learn about viticulture. William H. Seward also said he would support Haraszthy's trip to Europe, but failed to deliver on his promise and Haraszthy ended up paying for his travels abroad. Julius L. Jacobs, *Pioneer Wine Families in California* (San Francisco: California Historical Society, 1975); Agoston Haraszthy, *Grape Culture, Wines, and Wine-making: With Notes Upon Agriculture and Horticulture* (New York: Harper and Bros. 1862), xv. An article "Art Notes" in an undated newspaper clipping also writes: "Brookes has just finished a really admirable fruit piece, one of the best things that has come from his pencil for a long time. The artist has exhausted his skill on a champagne bottle, the glass of which has the true vitreous quality, and the gold leaf of which is remarkably realistic. The fruit is good, and the texture of everything that enters into the picture is delineated with fidelity to both nature and art." Cited by Barbara K. Gibbs, *Bountiful Harvest: Nineteenth-Century California Still-Life Painting* (Sacramento: Crocker Art Museum, 1991): 28.

<sup>92</sup> Brookes and Deakin may have also painted grapes to insert themselves into the legacy of trompe l'oeil painting, which dates back to ancient Greco-Roman times. This legacy culminated in the ancient Greek myth of artists Zeuxis and Parrhasios reported by Pliny the Elder in *Natural History*. In a competition to prove the better artist, Zeuxis painted a portrait of grapes so true to nature that it caused birds to peck at the canvas. Parrhasios, in turn, painted such a realistic portrayal of a curtain that Zeuxis asked the artist to peel it back, believing this depiction to be real. Because Parrhasios fooled the eye of an artist and not merely a bird, he was crowned the better painter. Brookes and Deakin may have painted hyper-realistic images of grapes to flaunt their own mastery of painting and the trompe l'oeil tradition. For more scholarship on trompe l'oeil in still-life painting consult: Judith Barter, "True to the Senses and False in its Essence: Still Life and Tromp L'oeil Painting in Victorian America" in *Objects of Desire: Victorian Art at the Art Institute of Chicago*. (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2005); Wendy Bellion, *Citizen*

(FIG. 16) While Brookes' and Deakin's paintings spoke to the future of California grapes, they also looked to California's past by depicting Spanish Mission grapes in front of historic Mission walls. These paintings transported viewers to California's gilded age when Franciscan missionaries built the state's first vineyards to cultivate grapes for religious ceremonies and trade. Missionaries also installed vineyards in California to "improve" the western landscape, which Thomas Hart Hyatt discusses in his *Handbook on Grapes* from 1867:

The secondary object" of Missionization, next to that of propagating their religious creed, was to encourage the culture of the soil, and the improvement of agriculture and horticulture around their several missions and, coming, as they did, from one of the finest grape growing countries of the world, it was very natural that they should have brought with them, not only the taste and experience of the best viniculturists, but also choice specimens of the grapes of Spain...<sup>93</sup>

Hyatt suggests that Spanish Missionaries cultivated grapes to "encourage the culture of the soil" and "improve" horticulture in California. The clearing of land, plotting of grapevines, and development of vineyards all worked in service of transforming California from a savage wilderness into a civilized vineyard. In the same way that Spanish Missionaries set out to "civilize" native Californians, they also endeavored to "civilize" the California landscape. The two operations were deeply intertwined since it was enslaved Native Americans who built Mission vineyards and cultivated Mission grapes under Spanish enforcement. The fact that conqueror Father Junípero Serra is credited with bringing the first Mission grape cutting to California reinforces the imperial

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*Spectator: Art, Illusion, and Visual Perception in Early National America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Martha Evans, *Claude Raguett Hirst: Transforming the American Still Life* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 2004); Alfred V. Frankenstein, *After the Hunt: William Harnett and Other American Still Life Painters 1870-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953); and David Lubin, "Masculinity, Nostalgia, and the Trompe L'Oeil Still-Life Paintings of William Michael Harnett," *Picturing a Nation: Art and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

<sup>93</sup> Hyatt, *Hyatt's Handbook of Grape Culture* (San Francisco: L. Bancroft and Co. 1867), 7.

implications of the Mission grapevine.<sup>94</sup> Grape growing, in this sense, was a colonial method used by missionaries to control the native people and landscapes of California.

Knowing that grape growing played an important role in Spanish colonization brings deeper meaning to Brookes' and Deakin's still-life paintings of Spanish Mission grapevines. By painting Mission grapes marching across Spanish walls like missionaries moving across the landscape, Brookes' and Deakin's still lifes highlight the imperial trajectory of grapes. (FIG. 17) The strong diagonal movement of grapes cutting across Deakin's *Mission Wall* especially suggests a sense of infiltration and trespassing. Deakin's painting may have specifically mapped Spanish infiltration in Texas and Florida: states which are outlined in the cracked stone of the Mission wall. Delineating a dip in the country where Texas stood, and the triangular overhang where Florida lay, the tile in Deakin's still-life painting loosely replicates a nineteenth-century map of states previously occupied by the Spanish.<sup>95</sup> What better way to picture the westward course of Spanish empire than with Spanish Mission grapes, a device used by the colonizers to advance their conquest in North America. The religious symbolism of grapes and their use for sacramental wine also conveyed Spain's "godly" mission to conquer California. Deakin's grapes, which hang limply across wooden vines in the manner of a crucifixion, emphasize the wedding between grapes and religious conquest in ancient California. Still-life paintings of Mission grapes in many ways glorify the Spanish colonial period in California.

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<sup>94</sup> Jacobs, 140.

<sup>95</sup> There is precedence for treating still-life paintings like maps. Edward Chalmers Leavitt created a map of rivers or states in his painting, *Apple on a Marble Tabletop* from 1862, which is discussed in chapter three of this project on the topic of still lifes and the Civil War.

(FIG. 18) Brookes may have also addressed the course of Spanish empire in his painting *California Mission Grapes* from 1865. While a large cluster of the characteristically purple grape hangs from a vine in the center of the composition, Brookes also painted a smaller and perhaps younger cluster of grapes suspended from a thin vine in the top left corner.<sup>96</sup> The depiction of young and mature Mission grapes is appropriate since this variety was known for its endurance throughout the centuries.

Thomas Hart Hyatt described the Mission grape as:

...a very hardy variety, and has stood the test for a century. It is about the only kind retained by the Spanish residents whose forefathers introduced it with other varieties from Spain upon their first settlement of this country...Introduced into California by the Jesuit Missionaries from Spain...they very much resemble a grape we have seen in Morocco, taken to that country, from Spain we presume, by the Moors, after the conquest.<sup>97</sup>

Hyatt portrays the Mission grape as a “hardy” fruit, carried from country to country by Spanish colonizers throughout the centuries. The colonial legacy of the Spanish Mission grape can be read in Brookes’ still-life painting that pictures two generations of Mission grapes growing steadfastly along a Mission wall. Painted in 1865—the same year that Doña Maria Marcelina Feliz died—Brookes may have depicted this Mission grapevine in honor of its Spanish ancestors. Paintings that honored the Spanish legacy in California diverge from attitudes in this time period that claimed Spanish growers were lazy, incompetent, and unable to sustain the livelihood of the Mission grapevine. The visual and material life of the Spanish Mission grapevine marks a complicated intersection in viewpoints about Spanish empire in California.

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<sup>96</sup> The smaller cluster can also be read as a group of older grapes that have reached maturity and are starting to dwindle. Either way, Brookes’ painting seems to chronicle different generations of grapes.

<sup>97</sup> Sarver, 12.

An exhibition of California grapes at Chicago's Columbian Exposition in 1893 continued to celebrate Spain's legacy in the West. (FIG. 19) This exhibit in the Horticultural Hall joined together grapes and wines cultivated by the most successful vintners of Northern California. Unlike the California wines stacked in a pyramid at the Philadelphia Centennial years earlier, wines at the Columbian Exposition sat inside an elaborate grotto constructed at the base of a 28 by 28 feet California Redwood Tree. (FIG. 20) A cluster of grapes, glass, and bottle of wine intersect the base of a post in the middle of the tree trunk that flies flags representing California and the United States.<sup>98</sup> Sculptures of a Native American woman and a Spanish Missionary figure (perhaps Junípero Serra) flanked either side of the flag and tree. These sculptures present a sequential narrative from left to right that display a picture of American progress, advancing from a society of "uncivilized" Natives to sophisticated Europeans.<sup>99</sup> The illustration of this exhibit in a brochure further flaunted the progress of California viticulture by highlighting the names of three wine businesses with products on display at the Exposition.<sup>100</sup> The backside of the brochure provided statistics that boasted the success of these companies and their California wines. Every inch of space in the Columbian exhibition and its illustration celebrated grape culture in California and its role in western progress.

(FIG. 21) The association between grapes and progress was even more explicit in a second part of this exhibition that displayed California wines underneath a panoramic

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<sup>98</sup> A horse's hoof and a shovel are also depicted on this post.

<sup>99</sup> Other artworks from this time period displayed a sequential narrative of national progress, including Thomas Crawford's sculptural frieze "Progress of Civilization," located outside the United States Capitol Building. See Vivien Green Fryd, *Art of Empire: The Politics of Ethnicity in the United States Capitol, 1815-1860* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1992): 109-124.

<sup>100</sup> These businesses include Arpad Harazthy, J. Gundlach and Co., and C. Carpy and Co.

mural of the San Francisco Bay leading into the Pacific Ocean, captioned with a banner stating: “Westward the Star of Empire Takes Its Way.” The imperial stakes of cultivating grapes in the American West was anything but subtle. Placing wine and grapes underneath a panoramic view of the Pacific Ocean clearly depicted grapes as the “star of empire” that helped America, like Spain, “take its way” across the Western frontier. Phrases inscribed on the left- and right-hand sides of the mural also encouraged California tourism by declaring: “Ye who enter here leave your cares behind” and “Welcome Stranger to the Realm of the Golden State.” Other phrases printed around the exhibit included “Good Wine. Good Welcome. Can make good people,” “Wine which cheereth God and Man,” and “Give Me a bowl of Wine in this I bury all unkindness.” Proverbial and biblical sayings about wine were likely included to emphasize the religious associations of wine and minimize its reputation as a sinful, intemperate substance by temperance supporters.<sup>101</sup> Grapes, in this sense, were employed once again in a world’s fair exhibit to demonstrate the progress of civilization in the American West.

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<sup>101</sup> In contrast to many scholars and fruit growers in the nineteenth century who depicted wine as a sacred substance celebrated many times in the Bible, temperance advocates portrayed wine as a dangerous gateway drug that led to more sinful abuses of alcohol. Dietician John Harvey Kellogg specifically said: “We can unhesitatingly state that [wine’s] habitual use as a beverage is a habit worthy of the most unqualified condemnation. It is productive of an untold amount of suffering, sin, and crime.” Dr. Thomas Bramwell Welch (of Welch’s Grape Juice fame) thereby campaigned for the use of unfermented grape juice in place of wine during religious ceremonies like communion, offering “the fruit of the vine, instead of the cup of devils.” Grapes ignited larger debates over “the wine question” in the late-nineteenth century. John Harvey Kellogg, *The Hygienic Cookbook*, (Battle Creek: The Office of the Health Reformer, 1876): 19; William Chazanof, *Welch’s Grape Juice: From Corporation to Co-operative*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1977): 1. For wine and grapes as a sacred substance, see: Reverend William Patton, *Bible Winds; or, the Laws of Fermentation and Wines of the Ancients* (New York: National Temperance Society and Publication House, 1874).



### **Missionaries of Art: Bringing Fruit and Progress to “America’s Rhineland”**

(FIG. 22) Although paintings of Mission grapes were lively tributes to the Spanish colonial period in California, many of the Mission walls pictured in these portrayals are crumbling, decaying, and peeled of paint. Critics specifically noted Deakin’s interest in “stained walls” “mellowed by time,”<sup>102</sup> saying that “if Mr. Deakin could paint anything at all, it was a hard stone wall.”<sup>103</sup> By investing so much attention to the walls of Mission churches, Deakin revealed how these structures were in a critical state of disrepair due to neglect by the California government.<sup>104</sup> (FIG. 23) The artist documented the poor condition of Mission churches in a book of sketches that he started in 1870 and completed in 1899.<sup>105</sup> On his journey to sketch the nation’s ruins, Deakin offered an honest view of the Mission churches that showed large areas of stucco paint eroding from the walls and massive piles of stonework peeling off adobe roofs. Writer Robert L. Hewitt lauded Deakin in 1905 for his “faithful transcriptions of vanishing monuments” that he painted “on the spot,” taking “no liberties whatever with his subjects.”<sup>106</sup> Accolades that stressed the truthfulness of Deakin’s paintings legitimated his

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<sup>102</sup> Robert L. Hewitt, “Edwin Deakin: An Artist with a Mission” *Brush and Pencil* 15 (Jan. 1905): 7. Hewitt wrote: “Few of the localities selected as sketching-grounds by artists have the atmospheric beauties of California, and when to this is added the fact that some of these buildings date back to the middle of the eighteenth century and are stained and mellowed by time and crumbling into ruins it can easily be understood that the missions were subjects to delight the heart of a true painter.”

<sup>103</sup> “The Art Exhibition,” *San Francisco News Letter and California Advertiser* (Apr. 22, 1882). Cited by Shields, 52.

<sup>104</sup> Jesuit missionaries built the first Mission churches extending from the Southern cape over the peninsula of California. The Spanish Franciscans then took over in the late 1760s under the leadership of Junipero Serra. With the eventual annexation of California into the United States, the mission churches fell under the ownership of the California government in the mid-nineteenth century. Hewitt, 5-6.

<sup>105</sup> By the end of his journey, Deakin produced two booklets of oil sketches and one booklet of watercolor illustrations that were published in 1899 and republished between 1900 and 1902. Shields, 72-74.

<sup>106</sup> Hewitt, 1, 4.

artworks as eye-witness accounts and vindicated the artist who was previously accused for creating “placeless” and “inaccurate” paintings.<sup>107</sup> In the eyes of critics, Deakin was a journalist seeking to expose California’s decaying and neglected structures.<sup>108</sup>

Deakin’s mission to preserve Spanish churches resembled the goals of environmentalist John Muir, who famously urged the government to protect the cultural and wildlife areas of Northern California.<sup>109</sup> In the spirit of Muir, Deakin treated his sketches as documents for the public that advocated for government preservation of California’s deteriorating Mission architecture. Deakin was so committed to reserving his paintings for the California public that he refused to “break up” this series or sell them to private buyers.<sup>110</sup> Unfortunately, collectors in Chicago took greater interest in Deakin’s sketches than patrons in California, which irritated the artist’s supporters who were insulted by the idea that his Mission paintings should “hang at the University of Illinois! And proud California, wealthy California, cultured California stands idly by.”<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> *The San Francisco Call* reported that “Mr. Deakin, a new artist, or at least one little known, shows a landscape of some nameless locality, which is remarkable for its bluish tone. It would require a pair of Muller’s double lenses to see a fragment of merit in this unnatural production.” Caliban, *San Francisco Call* (Nov. 10, 1870); *Overland Monthly* said “Deakin had several [paintings] that...at least, do not violate a clause of the second commandment, being indeed no likeness of anything in the heavens above or the earth below.” “Art Notes,” *Overland Monthly* (Dec. 1874): 574; Shields, 44. Critics also imagined Deakin as a Mission follower embarking on “pilgrimages” to churches across the State. Deakin may have cast himself as a Mission follower since he treated his sketches like religious votives, decorating the frames of his sketches with carved thorns, nails, and other Christian tropes. Shields, 69.

<sup>108</sup> The religious dimension of Spanish Mission architecture in Brookes’ and Deakin’s still-life paintings warrants further investigation. Their depiction of Catholic churches in a state of ruin might have reflected the perceived disintegration of Catholicism in the United States. Future versions of this project will treat this idea more deeply.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>110</sup> Deakin preferred to wait until “he disposed of them all in each other’s company.” *San Francisco Call* 97.25 (Dec. 25, 1904); Hewitt, 3; Shields 74.

<sup>111</sup> Shoup, “An Old Story in Crumbling Walls,” *Sunset* 4 (Apr. 1900): 244-245. Cited in Donald Cutter and Paul Mills, *A Gallery of California Mission Paintings by Edwin Deakin* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History, 1966). The full quote reads: “If California...permits the priceless heritage that Edwin Deakin has created for her to pass from her

A writer for the *San Francisco Call* agreed that Deakin's Mission paintings should "in all justice, belong to the [California] State University" and remain within the region.<sup>112</sup> In the end, Deakin's paintings were exhibited locally in San Francisco's Palace Hotel, where the urgency of preserving Mission churches was likely lost on hotel visitors.<sup>113</sup>

If Deakin treated his paintings of Mission churches as a civic project for public viewing, perhaps he also viewed his paintings of California grapes in service of the same goal. This might explain why many of Deakin's grape paintings were not exhibited in private collections or galleries but in public spaces such as state fairs, agricultural societies, and hotels throughout California. The California Mechanic's Fair was one venue that displayed Deakin's grape paintings, and exhibited his still lifes of Flaming Tokay, Cornshon, and Sweet Water grapes in 1884.<sup>114</sup> Here, Deakin's paintings formed an unlikely partnership with neighboring exhibitions of furniture, industrial machinery, and dental specimens that all intended to picture the cultural progress of California.<sup>115</sup> Similar to this exhibition at the Mechanic's Fair, the display of Deakin's grape paintings at the California State Agricultural Society sought to illustrate "the progress of

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possession, her grandchildren will not only mourn the loss but blush for the ignorance that permitted it. As I write, a party of wealthy Chicago men are raising fifty thousand dollars to buy these priceless paintings—for what?—for the University of Illinois? And proud California, wealthy California, cultured California stands idly by."

<sup>112</sup> *San Francisco Call* (Dec. 25, 1904).

<sup>113</sup> Barbara Berglund describes how Deakin's paintings were exhibited in Marple Hall at the Palace Hotel in a room dimly lit by electric lights. These images gelled well with the larger mission of the Palace Hotel to demonstrate California's social progress and lofty architectural past. Shields, 74; Molly Berger, *Hotel Dreams: Luxury, Technology, and Urban Ambition in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 161-163; Barbara Berglund, "Celebrating the City: Labor, Progress, and the Promenade at the Mechanics' Institute Fairs" *Making San Francisco American: Cultural Frontiers in the Urban West, 1846-1906* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 42.

<sup>114</sup> Berglund, 137-170.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

agriculture, horticulture and the mechanic arts in our state.”<sup>116</sup> In these ideologically-loaded spaces where California progress and industry were celebrated, Deakin’s still lifes of grapes were fitting additions that publicized the cultural advancement of California.

Brookes exhibited his grape paintings in the same state fairs and agricultural societies as Deakin, signaling the cultural currency of grape imagery in California at this time. But even when his still-life paintings were displayed in private homes, they still retained their national importance in collections by some of the most public figures invested in the progress of California and the broader nation. Mayor of San Francisco, William Alvord, for instance, purchased Brookes’ still-life paintings;<sup>117</sup> Smithsonian curator and educator, Professor Spencer Baird, also collected the artist’s still lifes;<sup>118</sup> California railroad tycoons Mark Hopkins and Collis Huntington purchased still lifes by Brookes as well, complementing their interest in cultivating the natural resources of California and transforming the State from a wilderness into a civilized garden.<sup>119</sup> (FIG. 24) Brookes’ still-life paintings continue to interest national figures today, including Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy who hangs Brookes’ *Still Life of Grapes* in his

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<sup>116</sup>“Annual Address Delivered Before the State Agricultural Society of California in the Pavilion at Sacramento,” (September 18, 1890), 3; Shields, 110.

<sup>117</sup> “The Art Galleries, New Paintings by Old and New Artists” Edwin and Robert Deakin Papers, Archives of American Art. The Mayor, in fact, was actively involved in San Francisco’s art scene. He served as president of the San Francisco Art Association in 1871, 1872, and 1875. In other years, he was on the Board of Directors and established the Avery Gold medal for excellence in drawing.

<sup>118</sup> Baird specifically purchased Brookes’ still lifes of salmon “in spawning time” for the purpose of scientific study. “Art Notes” *San Francisco Chronicle* (Oct. 30, 1876). News clipping from Edwin and Robert Deakin Papers at the Archives of American Art.

<sup>119</sup> Mark Hopkins purchased “Peacock” by Brookes in 1882 and Collis Huntington purchased still lifes of salmon by Brookes between the years 1900 and 1902. One would think Leland Stanford, another railroad tycoon, would have purchased still lifes by Brookes and Deakin since Stanford was deeply invested in California grape culture and even managed his own vineyard and winery in northern California. Fittingly, many of Deakin’s and Brookes’ grape paintings currently hang in the Crocker Art Museum, Stanford’s former mansion.

office at the United States Supreme Court.<sup>120</sup> It is significant that Brookes' grape paintings have been displayed in the homes of government officials, employees, and public figures. In the homes and offices of these political and educational ambassadors, Brookes' still-life paintings served as monuments to the California landscape and development of its resources.

Considering that Brookes' and Deakin's still-life paintings championed viticulture in California, it is peculiar that many of their representations do not actually resemble California. (FIG. 25) Paintings of grapes within crumbled corners of ancient temples and in deep recesses of medieval churches look more unique to Europe than Northern California. (FIG. 26) Deakin's *Grapes and Architecture* series specifically evokes Italy by showing heaps of grapes spilling over ancient marble ruins. Italian columns and reliefs of dancing figures clouded in a blue mist confirm Deakin's affection for the mystery of ancient Italian architecture. (FIG. 27) Deakin's *Offering to Bacchus* explicitly pays tribute to Italian mythology by displaying a marble façade decorated by nymphs, fawns, and a figure of Pan that references Bacchus, the ancient Italian god of wine. (FIG. 25) Deakin even invented a coat of arms for the grapes in his paintings, treating each grape like a historic family with their own historic allegiances.<sup>121</sup> The painters' interest in Italian and French traditions was likely inspired by their travels abroad to Europe in the 1870s and '80s.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Justice Kennedy was born and raised in Northern California, which may explain why he selected this painting of grapes for his office.

<sup>121</sup> Deakin's family had their own coat of arms, perhaps inspiring this feature in his paintings. He stenciled this coat of arms in the back of some of his paintings. Mills, 14.

<sup>122</sup> We know that Brookes travelled at least once to Europe in 1845 and Deakin travelled to Europe between 1877-79. Deakin's grape still lifes were also inspired by his year-long residency in Salt Lake City, Utah in 1884. The *Salt Lake Daily Herald* specifically stated that Deakin's painting of grapes were inspired by fruits at Salt Lake City's "Mr. Teasdel's." "Art Notes"

Despite their European features, critics read Brookes' and Deakin's still-life paintings of grapes as representations of California. One critic for *The San Franciscan* identified the fruits in Deakin's paintings as an "array of California grapes of all sizes and colors."<sup>123</sup> Another critic for *The San Francisco Chronicle* described Deakin's paintings as "overflowing with superb clusters of grapes peculiar to the vintage of this state."<sup>124</sup> A writer for *The Gazette* concluded that Deakin's painting, *Offering to Bacchus*, is "the most striking picture of California fruit ever placed on canvas."<sup>125</sup> In painting and reading these still-life paintings as pictures of California grapes, critics solidified California's reputation as the "Italy of the West" the "American Mediterranean."<sup>126</sup> The region's fruit, landscape, and weather all shored up comparisons between California and Italy, which a critic in San Francisco's *Daily Examiner* related to art in California by writing: "The climate of California, in its relation to San Francisco art, is worthy of more respectful consideration. The known history of the world and the history of art proves that only in such [warmer] climates has art ever been generated or it or has it ever

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(August 9, 1993); *San Franciscan* (Apr. 25 1883); Shields, 111; *Samuel Marsden Brookes: An Exhibition Jointly Sponsored by the California Historical Society at the Oakland Museum*, Ed. by Joseph Armstrong Baird, Jr. (1962). News clippings from Edwin and Robert Deakin Papers at the Archives of American Art.

<sup>123</sup> *San Franciscan* 4.3 (Nov. 22, 1884), news clipping from Edwin and Robert Deakin Papers at the Archives of American Art.

<sup>124</sup> "Among the Artists" *San Francisco Chronicle* (Dec. 28, 1884): 8, news clipping from Edwin and Robert Deakin Papers at the Archives of American Art.

<sup>125</sup> "Among the Artists" *The Gazette* (Mar. 25). Another critic described Deakin's *Offering to Bacchus* as displaying "huge bunches of grapes, comprising all the finest California varieties." Critics responded similarly to a painting called, *New Vintage*, asserting that the grapes "combine to make a picture in which Californians must feel a great interest." Another reviewer concluded that, "For clever paintings and graces of composition nothing equals the several pictures of California grapes which Mr. Deakin has succeeded so admirably in depicting." *San Franciscan* (Jan. 3 1885), *San Franciscan* (Apr. 25, 1885), Alex Comparet, *Denver Republican*, (May 12, 1889); *San Franciscan* (Nov. 22, 1884), news clippings from Edwin and Robert Deakin Papers at the Archives of American Art.

<sup>126</sup> Douglas Cazaux Sackman, *Orange Empire: California and the Fruits of Eden*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005): 29-30. California was also called the "God-child of Italy," Roberts, 197-200.

naturally thriven...<sup>127</sup> He goes on to compare the sunlit coasts of the Mediterranean to those of San Francisco, arguing that the “southern zones” produce superior art.<sup>128</sup> Art, in this sense, was determined by the climate and geographical position within which it is produced.<sup>129</sup> In constantly comparing the resources of California to Italy, critics helped elevate California to the ranks of Europe’s most historic cultural empire.

Vintners also contributed to California’s reputation as an “American Italy” and “California Rhineland” by suggesting that California wine equaled or surpassed European grape culture. Thomas Hart Hyatt, for instance, repeatedly pitted California against European viticulture, arguing that “we [in California] can produce as fine table grapes and as luscious raisins as France, Spain, Germany, or Italy.”<sup>130</sup> Agoston Haraszthy also claimed that California “is superior in all the conditions of soil, climate, and other natural advantages, to the most favored wine-producing districts of Europe...”<sup>131</sup> An article on grape culture in *Harper’s Weekly* emphatically declared that “California is a most phenomenal State. It is our Italy, our France, our Spain and Germany in one.”<sup>132</sup> It was important to level California to Europe in the late-nineteenth century when the state was

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<sup>127</sup> “San Francisco Art,” *Daily Examiner* (Jan. 26, 1889), news clipping from Edwin and Robert Deakin Papers at the Archives of American Art.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Climate theory, also known today as environmental determinism, was a European invention that divided the world into climates zones. Philosophers of climate theory such as Arthur de Gobineau and Johan Friedrich Blumenback believed that each climate zone impacted the character of its regional inhabitants. While the tropical climate of the “Torrid Zone” supposedly created passionate and courageous citizens, the weather of the “Temperate Zone” created rational, practical, and sophisticated citizens. Philosophers essentially used Climate Theory to claim that White societies of the Temperate Zone were superior to societies in the Torrid Zone.

<sup>130</sup> Hyatt, 24.

<sup>131</sup> Haraszthy, xv.

<sup>132</sup> Roberts, 197-200.

considered a young and unrefined frontier with little history or culture of its own.<sup>133</sup>

California wines were similarly criticized for being “too young” and immature.<sup>134</sup> To dismantle these prejudices, vintners raised the reputation of California wines by leveling them with the products of Europe: the world’s standard bearer on grapes and wine. California artists and vintners both borrowed the social status of Europe to improve the cultural reputation of California.

The artistic reputation of California was in particular need of improvement in the late-nineteenth century when a critic in the *California Art Gallery* explained, “The atmosphere of California at present is such that cultivated Europeans cannot breathe in it... Truly San Francisco has few attractions for the man of culture.”<sup>135</sup> To assist the development of cultural capital in California, the critic concluded that “California needs

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<sup>133</sup> Scott Shields would agree, explaining how Deakin’s paintings proved that “American history was not to be found only in the East... People were looking to the West and its vanishing heritage, which contributed to California’s understanding of their state’s place in history.” Shields, 72.

<sup>134</sup> Husmann said, “a great deal has been said about the importance of age for wines, and the evils of selling California wines too young. Edwards Roberts in *Harper’s Weekly* agreed that California wine was in its infancy in the 1870s, and “too young to be pressed on the market.” *Moore’s* reported that California wines were of poor quality due to the inexperience of vintners, bad casks, bad land, and sacrifice of quality for quantity. Husmann, *American Grape Growing and Wine Making*, 253; Roberts, 197-200; “The Wine Business of California,” *Moore’s Rural New-Yorker* (Oct. 19, 1876): 395.

<sup>135</sup> John L. Tremeneere, “Art in California” *California Art Gallery* 1 (Jan. 18, 1873): 3. Deakin also complained about the lack of public support, telling a reporter that “the public [shows] indifference.... and profound lack of regard as to whether or not it takes any interest in art. The result is that the number of those who, with trifling encouragement, would become genuine admirers and patrons of art, continue very few in number, and the artist himself is the loser.” “An Art Proposition: Rotary Exhibitions of Representative Paintings” *Salt Lake Daily Herald*, newspaper clipping found in the Edwin and Robert Deakin Papers at the Archives of American Art. Other articles on the failing art scene in California include “Art: More Substantial Recognition Needed from Leading Citizens.” *Daily Evening Post* (May, 1, 1880); “San Francisco Art: How a Studio Building Might be Secured” *Daily Examiner* (1889). News clippings from Edwin and Robert Deakin Papers at the Archives of American Art.



missionaries, missionaries of art.”<sup>136</sup> Critics considered grape painters like Brookes a missionary of art and authority on taste, saying:

Of those to whom is due the credit of directing the taste of our people in the better channels...is... Samuel M. Brookes, the well known painter of still-life. He has been associated, as one of the organizers, with each concerted attempt to establish Art Unions and Schools, and has been well represented by his works at every public exhibition since his arrival in our city.<sup>137</sup>

Brookes helped “direct the taste” of Californians as founder of the California Art Union, director of the California Art Association, and member of the Graphic Club and San Francisco Art Association.<sup>138</sup> Deakin, too, was an art instructor and founding member of these art unions, and considered “an educator in the finest sense of the word.”<sup>139</sup>

Brookes’ and Deakin’s contribution to art was perceived as a charitable service that helped transform citizens in California who were once “devoid of any sympathy with Art.”<sup>140</sup> Attitudes towards Brookes and Deakin reinforce how grape painters played a role in advancing civilization in California.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> John L. Tremeneere, “Art in California” *California Art Gallery* 1 (Jan. 18, 1873): 3, news clipping from Edwin and Robert Deakin Papers at the Archives of American Art.

<sup>137</sup> “Samuel M. Brookes” *California Art Gallery* (May 1873) Found in artist file at William Gerds’ Library.

<sup>138</sup> Brookes was also Vice President of the San Francisco Art Association in 1875 and Director in 1877, ‘79, ‘80, ‘81, and ‘88.

<sup>139</sup> “Art” *The Mercury, A Saturday Evening Paper*, a news clipping from Edwin and Robert Deakin Papers at the Archives of American Art. An article in San Francisco’s *Daily Evening Post* also hailed Brookes and Deakin for giving “so much luster to San Francisco art.” “Esthetic Enlightenment” (Mar. 13, 1880), news clipping from Edwin and Robert Deakin Papers at the Archives of American Art.

<sup>140</sup> “Samuel M. Brookes” *California Art Gallery* (May, 1873).

<sup>141</sup> On the other side of the country, in the same time period, grape painter Andrew John Henry Way demonstrated a similar commitment to the cultivation of art. In addition to founding the Maryland Academy of Fine Arts in 1871 and the Charcoal Club of Baltimore in 1885, Way opened an art school to instruct students on drawing, painting, and etching. By instituting art schools and clubs across the city, Way hoped that “this will give us [in Baltimore] the opportunity to buy more artworks worthy of the improving taste of this community. It is meaningful that in the same time period, and on complete opposite coasts, grape painters in Baltimore and San Francisco lead initiatives to cultivate artistic progress and taste.

It is fitting that still-life painters spearheaded the program to cultivate artistic taste since grapes themselves were producers of taste and progress in California. In the same way that art helped civilize California's coarse taste, grapes were thought to civilize America's coarse and wild landscape. Andrew Fuller explained how "vine culture has been a constant attendant upon civilization, following it from country to country, and progressing with it..."<sup>142</sup> He concluded that the grapevine "has a tendency to improve upon its *wild* nature..."<sup>143</sup> Cultivating art and grapes produced such similar goals in the late-nineteenth century that artists and vintners often framed their work in the same terms. Art critics in San Francisco who declared that cultivating art would "awaken" "dormant" Californians<sup>144</sup> echoed vintners in the same region who asserted that grape growing would awaken the California landscape and develop "it's now dormant resources."<sup>145</sup> Grape growers, as a result, functioned like artists as missionaries of culture and "attendants" upon civilization. Brookes' and Deakin's depictions of Mission grapes especially resonate with their role as cultural missionaries since they, like the earlier carriers of Mission grapes, were committed to bringing "civilization" and "culture" to Northern California. The cultivation of grapes in soil and on canvas reveal how grape painters and growers performed similar cultural work.

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<sup>142</sup> Fuller, 7. William Chorlton similarly stated that the cultivation of grapes "has followed the migrations of civilized man..." *Grape Grower's Guide: A Handbook of the Cultivation of the Exotic Grape* (New York: Orange Judd Co., 1894), 11.

<sup>143</sup> Fuller, 3.

<sup>144</sup> "Pallet and Brush: Our Artists in Pen and Ink," *The Daily Morning Call* (Nov. 18, 1884). The full quotation is "we were dormant and now we are awake and alive. We have an Art Association, and the artists find patrons. A new picture is a pleasant event, and is gladly welcomed. We have learned to appreciate (some of us), and the rest of us, can at least, enjoy."

<sup>145</sup> Haraszthy, xvii. The full quotation is "I was gratified to find that of all the countries, through which I passed, not one possessed the same advantages that are to be found in California; and I am satisfied that even if the separate advantages of these countries could be combined in one, it would still be surpassed by this State when its now dormant resources shall be developed."

### **Treading the Wine Press: Representations of Grape Labor in California**

Although fruit painters were so in step with fruit growers, depictions of grapes display little information about the actual labor of harvesting grapes. The subject of grape labor, in fact, is expunged from most representations of the fruit, omitting any signs of the grape laborer or their grape-growing equipment. This omission is conventional in still lifes of grapes that pastoralize grape labor and obscure the perils of grape picking, which involved working through severe dust, insecticidal chemicals, and challenging weather. Grape picking presented other physical challenges as well, requiring pickers to bend their backs in painful angles so as to clip the grapes from their stems. Grape paintings, illustrations, and literature avoided these uncomfortable realities, instead picturing grape labor as pleasant and easy. Horticultural literature, in general, disguised the labor of fruit cultivation by claiming that fruit differs from other forms of agriculture by an entire absence of the drudgery that accompanies life on a farm.<sup>146</sup> Such notions were dangerously untrue. Still-life representations of grapes relayed the same fictional message, omitting the taxing labor that characterized both contemporary and historical conditions for grape laborers.

(FIG. 28) Scholars can better understand the competing narratives behind grape picking by analyzing a rare image of grape labor from an 1878 article in *Harper's Weekly*.<sup>147</sup> For the article, "The Vintage in California," Paul Frenzeny illustrated a picture of laborers manually stomping grapes and pressing the fruit through grape-crushing machines for the production of wine. The grape crushing machine was a recent

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<sup>146</sup> Cited in Steven Stoll, *The Fruits of Natural Advantage: Making the Industrial Countryside in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998): 41.

<sup>147</sup> "The Vintage in California," *Harper's Weekly* 10.5 (1878), 790.

invention when this article was published, mechanized by huge wire wheels that squeezed grapes through cast-iron cylinders. According to Helen Hunt Jackson, this device was an extraordinary site to see, causing grape juice to fly through these machines, creating an environment “reeking with winy flavor.”<sup>148</sup> As few as two men could “easily crush five thousand pounds of grapes in a day” with the assistance of the grape crushing machine.<sup>149</sup> America’s ancient landscape and promising future were both embodied in this image of “The Vintage in California.” Frenzeny’s illustration ultimately flaunted the technological advancements in Northern California that marshaled in a new era in wine production.

It is noteworthy that Frenzeny’s illustration shows mostly Asian grape laborers. This was an accurate observation according to William Heintz, whose research on grape cultivation in nineteenth-century California reveals how Chinese laborers typically grew and pressed California grapes.<sup>150</sup> Many Americans endorsed Chinese grape laborers, believing that “the Chinese make good [grape] pickers on account of their stolid industry and genius for plodding.”<sup>151</sup> An article in the *San Francisco Merchant* agreed that “the best hand in the grape field by all odds is the little chinamen. He grows close to the ground, so [he] does not have to bend his back like a large white man. Besides, he is very

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<sup>148</sup> Jackson, *Century Illustrated Magazine*, 806.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> William F. Heintz, *The Role of Chinese Labor in Viticulture and Wine Making in Nineteenth-Century California*, M.A. Thesis (Sonoma: Sonoma State University, 1977). Heintz wrote, “Chinamen were generally employed as pickers, although the children and wives of Spanish or white men sometimes took their place.” For more information on Asian agricultural labor in nineteenth-century California, see: Sucheng Chan, *This Bittersweet Soil: The Chinese in California Agriculture, 1860-1910* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1989).

<sup>151</sup> *San Francisco Chronicle* (1883): 46. Quoted in Heintz’ thesis, p. 46.

supple-fingered. And it does not take a John L. Sullivan to lift a bunch of grapes.”<sup>152</sup>

Asian men were also believed to be physically suited for agricultural work with short legs and backs that enabled them to easily stoop and squat.<sup>153</sup> Comments that suggested fruit labor was easy and did not require the brawn of an Anglo “John L. Sullivan” perpetuated stereotypes about Asian men as weak and unmanly.<sup>154</sup> Reports about the height, posture, and fingers of Asian fruit growers also suggested that the Asian race was genetically engineered to grow fruit.

Although many critics believed that Asian men were perfectly suited for grape cultivation, a number of critics took issue with the portrayal of Asian workers in Frenzeny’s illustration. A writer for the *San Francisco Call* wrote,

A recent number of Harper’s Weekly contained a full-page engraving purporting to represent a scene in a California vineyard. The artist was Frenzeny, and his pencil had had free and vigorous play. He has libeled the State, however. A feature in the picture was the number of Chinamen introduced, and especially a gang of Celestials who were shown treading the wine press.”<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> “Wine-making in California,” reprinted in *San Francisco Merchant* xvii (Jun. 10, 1887): 35, 53. Quoted in Heintz’ thesis, p. 35.

<sup>153</sup> Sackman, 128. Sackman quotes one grower who said “the short-legged, short-backed Asiatic performs all of the stoop-over work, the squat work. He stands any temperature. He works in every sun and clime.”

<sup>154</sup> Interestingly, “John L. Sullivan” resembles the name “*John L. O’Sullivan*,” who coined the term “Manifest Destiny” in 1839. Perhaps the author of this quote intentionally compared Asian laborers to the Anglo “John L. Sullivan” in support of the belief that Asian men too were destined to labor the landscape. A number of farmers argued that fruit labor was healthy for the colored worker, helping to improve the worker’s tools and sophistication. Frieda Knobloch, for instance, provides evidence of “agricultural boosters” in 1899 who believed that the “Filipino will gladly exchange the crooked timber he stirs his rice bed with today for an American plow.” Agricultural work, in this sense, was thought to modernize the colored laborer and convert them to the superior tools and habits of North Americans. Frieda Knobloch, *The Culture of Wilderness: Agriculture As Colonization in the American West*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996): 76, originally cited in Robert Ardrey, *American Agricultural Implements* (New York: Arno Press, 1894, Reprinted 1972), 6.

<sup>155</sup> “John Chinamen in the Wine Press” (Oct. 14, 1878), Quoted in Heintz’ thesis, p. 75.

Years later, a writer in the *Cloverdale Reveille* similarly criticized Frenzeny's print for showing "three or four chinamen, with bare limbs...treading out the juice."<sup>156</sup> This print, he argued, "without a doubt injured California wines to some extent."<sup>157</sup> Repeated concerns about "Chinamen" treading the wine press and using their "bare limbs" and feet to create grape juice indicates a clear discomfort with Asian bodies creating wine.<sup>158</sup> Perhaps these anxieties permeated the production of wine because, of all beverages, wine historically relied on measurements of purity for its success. Secretary of State James G. Blaine more generally feared the impact of Chinese laborers on the California workforce, saying, [Americans] "who eat beef and bread and who drink beer cannot labor alongside of those who live on rice." If Asian immigration continues on a large scale, "the American laborer will have to drop his knife and fork and take up the chop-sticks."<sup>159</sup> Readers launched concerns about Chinese laborers polluting the American landscape in a time period of severe racism against Chinese immigrants, who would soon be prohibited from entering the United States with the passing of the Chinese Exclusionary Act in 1882.<sup>160</sup> Images of wine and the vineyard, therefore, became an important site in the late-nineteenth century for debating the racial purity of the country.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> *Cloverdale Reveille* (May 20 1882): 4, Quoted in Heintz' thesis, p. 75.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Mrs. Henry Ward Beecher felt similarly about the cultivation of sugar by Chinese laborers, disgusted by the "heathen Chinamen" who "stand ankle deep in the black mass of sugary syrup." She asked, is there not a better alternative to creating sugar that has been "waded through so long by the filthy beings?" Such sentiments struck a nerve with white farmers who believed that immigrants did not deserve to cultivate the American landscape. These farmers largely felt that growers of color "ruined the virtuous sweat" of White farmers who helped build California's landscape. Beecher, *All Around the House or, How to Make homes Happy* (New York: D. Appleton and Co. 1878): 151; Stoll, *Fruits of Natural Advantage*, 134.

<sup>159</sup> Love, 95. Originally quoted in Charles C. Tansill, *The Foreign Policy of Thomas F. Bayard, 1855-1897* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1940), 127-128 from the *San Francisco Chronicle* (Dec. 28, 1878).

<sup>160</sup> Steven Stoll explains that some supporters of the Chinese Exclusionary Act felt that "respectable work belonged to respectable white men, the same people who shed a virtuous sweat

(FIG. 29) Despite the disapproval for Frenzeny's illustration, *Harper's Weekly* published another depiction of California grape labor a decade later in 1888. In this hand-colored, wood engraving that accompanied the article "California Wine Culture," illustrator Charles Graham showed a picturesque view of vineyards in Napa and Marin counties. His depiction of grassy lands and leafy foliage portrayed the fertility of the region that produced nearly 2,000,000 gallons of wine per year in the 1880s. In addition to providing snapshots of the area's hop ranch and vineyards, Graham depicted a portrait of an Asian grape picker in the top register of the picture plane. While this portrait subscribes to conventions of ethnic caricature,<sup>162</sup> enclosing the grape picker in a picture frame served to reframe traditional notions of the grape grower and literally turn him *picture*-esque. Bathing the grape picker in washes of color also performed a kind of cleansing to the laborer, who was thought by some to pollute the wine he produced. This illustration creates a paradox in which the Asian grape picker is honored with a framed portrait, but also objectified as an exotic object on display. In a time period when fruit growers were believed to influence the racial purity of an eater, pictures of the grape picker became important sites for forming attitudes about race and the citizenship of Asian immigrants. Ten years after Frenzeny's illustration was published, Graham's

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to build California into a white man's civilization. Chinese immigrants had no place in such a conception; indeed, they violated it by their presence." Stoll, 134.

<sup>161</sup> Grapes in California would continue to be a battleground for debates about race and labor into the twentieth century, culminating in the famous Delano Grape Strike and Boycott of 1965. Organized by the United Farm Workers, this strike lasted five years in the demand for higher wages. The victorious strike marked an important moment in the United Farm Worker history, inspiring momentum for the organization led by Cesar Chavez in the 1970s.

<sup>162</sup> The grape picker wears a conical, straw hat, a convention visible in many caricatures of Asian immigrants from the time period.

illustration helped soften the image of the Asian grape picker and picture him as domesticated as the landscape which he cultivates.<sup>163</sup>

Pictures of grape labor not only provide a prism for analyzing American attitudes towards race but also gender. (FIG. 30) A still-life painting by Robert Spear Dunning is particularly useful in deciphering the role of women in grape growing. In this tightly cropped view of two hands exchanging grapes from a straw hat, it appears the left hand belongs to a male laborer whose wrinkled skin likely developed from arduous work outdoors. The man's inexpensive straw hat, which he would have used to shield the sun, produces a sharp contrast to the luxurious gold-trimmed sleeve and glistening pearl-drop bracelet hanging from the woman's hand on the right. Her wrinkleless, fair-skinned hand reflects the status of a wealthy woman who possesses the freedom from laboring in the sun. This portrayal of a poor farmer offering grapes to a rich woman instructed nineteenth-century viewers on the virtues of charity and generosity. The portrait of giving is particularly poignant since it is the farmer of lesser means who initiates the tender act of giving grapes to another. While such still-life paintings obscured the class conflicts written in the American soil, they also perpetuated gender biases that maintained a woman's role belonged in the home and not the field.

A number of vintners, however, made efforts to include women in the arena of viticulture. In his *Treatise on the Garden and Vineyard*, John Phin encouraged women to experiment with a profession in grape growing, writing:

Another point in this aspect of grape culture, and one in which we have strong confidence and ardent hope, is the employment which it promises to afford women. We are none of those who would desire to see woman rendered independent of man....but we cannot shut

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<sup>163</sup> By the late 1890s, fewer Chinese laborers were involved in grape culture. With the increase in Chinese violence, and a new decline in Chinese population with the 1882 Exclusion Act, Italian grape laborers started to replace Asian immigrants in the positions for grape growers. Heintz, 79.



our eyes to the fact that there are vast multitudes of women whose labor receives no adequate remuneration...<sup>164</sup>

Phin pays tribute to the “vast multitudes of women” whose grape labor is overlooked, though he is cautious not to endorse complete economic independence for women growers. Phin also rejects the idea that grape culture “is unsuited to the sphere of woman,” writing in his manual: “we promise them that if they undertake it they will soon acquire the necessary health and strength.”<sup>165</sup> William Chorlton agreed in his book *The American Grape Grower’s Guide* that fruit cultivation benefitted the physical and mental fitness of women. He argued, “It is better for women to grow grapes and obtain a knowledge of plants and get healthy exercise than read exciting and voluptuous novels on the downy sofa, so we need to encourage women to be more active horticulturists...”<sup>166</sup> Horticulturists, in effect, invited women to grow grapes on vineyards without expanding their role too broadly outside the home.

Domestic and horticultural manuals specifically extolled the benefits of fruit growing for little girls and young women. The Beecher sisters, for instance, advised that the best thing you could do for your daughters is “introduce them to the cultivation of fruit.”<sup>167</sup> It is “a great domestic exercise” for young girls that will “secure their health and vigor of constitution.”<sup>168</sup> William Saunders, author of *Both Sides of the Grape*

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<sup>164</sup> Phin, *Open Air Grape Culture: A Practical Treatise on the Garden and Vineyard Culture of the Vine* (New York: Woodward, 1876), 27.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Chorlton, 17. In *Harper’s Weekly*, Edward Roberts also reported that “instances are not rare of women engaging in the work of grape-growing with great profit and success...visitors, as a result, will find that the occupation is not for men alone.” An article from the *Pacific Rural Press* described how women such as a “Miss Hannah Millard” were even authoring manuals California grape culture. Roberts, 197-200; “A Book of California Grapes” *Pacific Rural Press*, (September, 6, 1876): 192.

<sup>167</sup> Catherine Ester Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *American Woman’s Home: Or, Principles of Domestic Science* (New York: J.B. Ford, 1869): 295.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

*Question*, also invited young women to experiment with grape cultivation, saying: “friends of the vine everywhere, try it. Encourage your little girls to try it... Your children... will take delight in watching the development of the young plant trained by their young hands. I know it.”<sup>169</sup> These authors viewed grape cultivation as an important exercise in womanhood through the training and domestication of fruits. Grape cultivation, as a result, directly translated into a woman’s role as a mother by providing young girls with the practice of rearing children. Robin Vedder discusses the application of parenting to plants in her article, “Mother Love for Plant Children,” revealing how fruit and flower cultivation was indeed a training ground for young girls to practice motherly love.<sup>170</sup> The fact that women were encouraged to cultivate fruit and flowers in the home, and not in the professional garden or vineyard, shows how fruit growing reinforced traditional gender roles that naturalized a woman’s place in the home. The likening of growing children to growing grapes is fitting since grape cultivation was more broadly thought to help train and cultivate society. This viewpoint, which was reflected in still-life paintings, horticultural manuals, and world’s fair exhibits throughout the nineteenth century, highlights the extraordinary social agency that grapes carried in North America.

## **Conclusion**

The representation and cultivation of grapes, therefore, held great social importance in the late-nineteenth century. Grape culture not only formed ideas about

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<sup>169</sup> William Saunders, *Both Sides of the Grape Question* (Philadelphia: J.P. Lippincott and Co., 1860): 72.

<sup>170</sup> Robin Veder, “Mother-Love for Plant-Children: Sentimental Pastoralism and Nineteenth-Century Parlour Gardening” *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 26 (2007), 20-34.

gender and femininity in North America, but also attitudes towards race and citizenship in this time period. Illustrations of Asian grape workers provide an especially useful platform for discussing race and national identity, revealing how the vineyard was wrought with tension over where food was grown and who cultivated it. Representations of Spanish Mission grapes also contributed to these debates by glorifying or, in some cases criticizing, Spanish grape growers in California. An exhibition of the Mammoth Mission Grapevine at the Philadelphia Centennial ignited this debate and generated a narrative about progress in California that ascended from the grape-growing cultures of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to the modernized culture of grapes in the nineteenth century. An exhibition of California grapes at the Columbian Exposition perpetuated this narrative by explicitly linking the cultivation of grapes to the cultivation of land and progress in the American West. This colonial agenda penetrated still-life paintings that endorsed the transformation of California from a wilderness into an American “Rhineland.” Fruit painters and fruit growers in the late-nineteenth century cleverly understood how grapes could be a strategic device in service of national expansion.

Grapes had long been national symbols in North America, used earlier in the nineteenth century during the Civil War to comment on the political state of the Union. While many Americans referenced grapes in Civil-War songs and on Civil-War envelopes to portray a nation divided, they also used grapes in horticultural manuals and fruit premiums to unite American farmers around the combined goal of building a national grape industry. Several artists displayed the nation’s mania for grapes, depicting grapes of all varieties and types grown throughout the country. These paintings

complicated the movement to invent a uniquely indigenous grape that would compete with the historic grape varieties of Europe. The competition to create an honorable and superior grape to Europe persisted far into the twentieth century when, to the surprise of many, California wines succeeded French wines in the prestigious Paris Wine Tasting of 1976. In the “Judgment of Paris,” eleven French judges performed blind wine tastings that determined California as the winner in nearly all categories. Unseating France as the authority on wine and taste caused suspicion among many European critics who could not fathom that California wines ranked superior to European ones. The Judgment of Paris belongs to a long lineage of cultural competitions establishing a rivalry between American and European grapes. Looking back to the visual and material history of the grape in America reveals the cultural capital that this fruit carried and its profound role in shaping American empire.

## **Chapter Two**

### **The Golden Apple: Florida Oranges and Yankee Politics in the Reconstruction**

#### **South**

In the wide spectrum of fruits, oranges are the only food whose color also shares its name. This is fitting considering that the fruit's vibrant color induced colorful fantasies about the tropical places where it grows. These fantasies grew brighter after the Civil War when the nation was looking south and west to explore the economic potential of America's fruit-lands. Many farmers cultivated oranges after the war to help stimulate the South's agricultural economy and diversify the market dominated by cotton and tobacco. Curiously, it was not Southern farmers who spearheaded the orange industry but Northern activists like Harriet Beecher Stowe who moved to Florida and purchased orange groves. Northern activists understood how cultivating oranges in Florida could help cultivate Northern influence and money in the South. Images of oranges in Southern travel literature explicitly encouraged Northern migration in Florida by advertising the culinary riches to be reaped from harvesting Southern frontiers. Some of the most seductive depictions of Florida oranges were visible in tourist brochures, trade cards, and women's magazines that publicized the state's raw resources to Northern audiences. Paintings and photographs by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Martin Johnson Heade, and William Henry Jackson also painted an attractive portrait of life on the Florida citrus grove. Contextualizing these artworks in the greater visual culture of Florida oranges points to the vibrant political life of this fruit and its use in Northern efforts to colonize the American South.

An examination of Florida art and oranges inevitably requires an examination of the transcontinental railroad. The railroad was a key ingredient to Florida expansion because it enabled the mobility of food and people to travel to and from the South. The opening of Florida to the wider country was made possible by a number of railroad moguls, including Henry Flagler, whose combined investments in Florida railway, hotels, orange groves, and art all worked in concert to advance tourism and migration to the South. It is no surprise, then, that artworks commissioned by Flagler portrayed idealized views of Florida's orange groves that disguised the drudgeries of citrus labor. Representations of Florida citrus groves also diminished the role of African Americans in citrus labor, who contributed to the orange industry by picking, packing, and transporting the fruit. A study of images depicting Black citrus workers attempts to recover this history that has been obscured by nineteenth-century representations of oranges. Paintings of orange groves by artists William Aiken Walker and Henry Ossawa Tanner are also useful in understanding the tenuous social status that African Americans occupied in late-nineteenth century Florida. The visual and material culture of oranges, therefore, unlocks the door to understanding how fruit and art facilitated powerful conversations about the reconstruction of the South.

### **“The New South”: The Cultural Awakening of Florida in the Era of Reconstruction**

In the aftermath of the Civil War, two titans in citrus production emerged: California and Florida. Both states possessed a growing economy and advantages in climate that made the regions ripe for an orange industry. Although California in the end triumphed as the country's citrus giant, Floridians tried to steer fruit-growers south instead of west by marketing the state as a family-friendly alternative to the lawless

California. One brochure guaranteed readers that in the South, “There is a total absence of the wild, anxious, eager class of excited, young, single men arrayed in flannel shirts, broad felt hats, top-boots, armed with knives and immense navy revolvers, their brains filled with visionary ideas of suddenly acquired wealth, that are so plentiful in Western countries.”<sup>171</sup> Another pamphlet confirmed that “the rowdy and vagabond element” of the West was “at a minimum” in Florida.<sup>172</sup> An article entitled *The New South Versus the New West* specifically pitted Florida against California and warned migrants that “the condition of things in the far West has been growing more and more gloomy in recent years...The ‘glorious West’ [is] anything but a land of promise.”<sup>173</sup> By claiming that California possessed a gloomy future and unruly population, Floridians hoped that migrant farmers and their families would abandon their dreams of moving west for the south.

Florida, however, was at a great disadvantage to California because the Civil War had significantly weakened the Southern economy. Florida, in fact, was one of the poorest states after the War, requiring a staggering eleven years of Reconstruction to fully rejoin the Union in 1877. This knowledge shatters the notion that Florida remained unfettered from the politics of the War, located “too far from the theater of strife to feel

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<sup>171</sup> George Barbour, *Florida for Tourists, Invalids and Settlers* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1882), 225.

<sup>172</sup> J.F. Bartholf, *South Florida, the Italy of America: Its Climate, Soil, and Productions* (Jacksonville: Ashmead Bros., 1881), 112.

<sup>173</sup> *The New South Versus the New West: A New Field for Home Seekers, Extracts from the Speeches of a Few Public Men and Newspapers upon this Subject* in the Henry Leslie Lyman Scrapbook at the Winterthur Museum and Library. Another pamphlet stated, “Florida is not only the peer, but the superior, of any of those great mines of agricultural wealth in the States which we have familiarly denominated the “Great West...Here in Florida...you can at once enter upon a profitable production without the suffering and endurance incident to pioneer life in the West.” Florida’s Fruit Growers Association, *Proceedings at its Annual Meeting*, (Jacksonville: Charles Walton and Co., 1875), 22;

the terrible blows that brought down the revolt.”<sup>174</sup> The Civil War specifically wreaked havoc on Florida’s agricultural resources, destroying cotton and tobacco plantations, farm buildings and agricultural machinery, as well as the region’s supply of work animals. Southern farmers also battled the widespread theft of crops during and after the Civil War, which presented another challenge to the revitalization of Southern agriculture.<sup>175</sup> Florida’s bankruptcy in agricultural resources inspired its reputation as a backwards and primitive state. One article in the *Semi-Tropical Newspaper* claimed:

The South is full a hundred years behind the North in everything; and this is more true when speaking of Florida than of the other southern states. It is a sort of a wild pasture-ground parceled out into great estates several thousand acres each, under the old Spanish grants. Not a tenth of the land is yet cleared, while the remaining portion is but a tangle of swamp and pine-forest.<sup>176</sup>

Florida, in this view, was as a tangled, unkempt wilderness that trailed years behind the agricultural progress of the North.<sup>177</sup> The need for organized agriculture and “civilization” in Florida was thought to be profound.

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<sup>174</sup> In addition to battling a depressed economy, historian Jerrell Shofner explains that Floridians had to adjust to “the greatest single change in postwar-society Florida: the disintegration of enslaved labor.” Since slaves comprised nearly half of Florida’s population, the de-installation of slavery incited great change in the State. Out of a population of 140,000 people, 61,500 men and women were slaves in Florida. Jerrell H. Shofner, *Nor is it over Yet: Florida in the Era of Reconstruction, 1863-1877*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1974): 29, 65, 127; John Wallace, *Carpetbag Rule in Florida: The Inside Workings Of The Reconstruction Of Civil Government In Florida After The Close Of The Civil War*, (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012), xvi; Reported in *Proceedings of the Florida Fruit-Growers’ Association and its Annual Meeting Held in Jacksonville* (Jan. 20-23 1875, Jacksonville: Office of the Florida Agriculturist” 1875), 67.

<sup>175</sup> Shoffner, 129.

<sup>176</sup> *Semi Tropical* v.2 (Oct. 1, 1875): 19-20.

<sup>177</sup> Another writer similarly declared that “Florida, it seems, is not a land of flowers, but rather a wilderness, where there is ample room for planting fruit and civilization.” “Oranges,” *Harper’s Weekly* (Aug. 23, 1879), 663. Helen Warner also noted how after the Civil War “a new people began to press beyond the borders of Florida, bringing in their midst a commencement of a new era in its hitherto stagnant civilization.” *Florida Fruits and How to Raise Them* (Louisville: John Morton and Co., 1886), 14. Harriet Beecher Stowe similarly wrote, “Florida, as yet, has been a sort of wild land...parceled out into great estates...of which, perhaps, only twelve hundred acres is cleared land, and the rest a tangle of forests, interspersed with swamps...systematic agriculture of any kind there has been none...Systematic farming, gardening, and fruit growing is, therefore,



Many laws created during and after the Civil War helped modernize agriculture in Florida. Two of the most influential laws include the Morrill Act of 1862 and the establishment of the Department of Agriculture in the same year. The latter piece of legislation was particularly influential in invigorating Florida farming by creating agricultural universities across the South that sought to provide farmers with the latest education in crop cultivation, fertility maintenance, labor-saving devices, and fruit-growing strategies.<sup>178</sup> The Homestead Acts providing cheap Southern land to migrants also helped improve Florida fruit and agriculture, leading one farmer to believe that if Florida “could be surveyed and opened under the homestead act to actual settlers...all tropical fruits...could be raised in great abundance.”<sup>179</sup> The distribution of land thereby could enhance fruit cultivation and vice versa. To further advance Southern fruit and flora-culture, the Florida Fruit Growers Association asked Congress in 1875 to institute a national garden in the state.<sup>180</sup> The government’s consideration of locating a national garden in the South marked a significant step towards reconciliation that deviated from years earlier during the Civil War when Southern farmers were prohibited from even sending fruit specimens to the government.<sup>181</sup> New policies during Reconstruction clearly incited change to both the political and agricultural landscape of the South.<sup>182</sup>

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in its infancy in Florida...what can be done here by applying the patient, careful, and watchful labor which is given to the hard farms of the North is yet to be seen.” “What Shall We Raise in Florida?” *Hearth and Home* (May 8, 1869), 312.

<sup>178</sup> Sara Phillips, “Antebellum Agricultural Reform, Republican Ideology and Sectional Tension,” *Agricultural History* 74.4 (Autumn: 2000), 799. For reasons why these bills passed see Paul Wallace Gates, *Agriculture and the Civil War* (New York: Knopf, 1964), 262-264. The Department of Agriculture’s William Saunders also created an experimental garden that fostered research on hybridized fruits and fruit-growing strategies.

<sup>179</sup> “Our Pineapple Plantation” *Haney’s Journal* (Aug. 1, 1871).

<sup>180</sup> *Florida Fruit-Growers’ Association Proceedings at its Annual Meeting*, 45.

<sup>181</sup> *Gardeners Monthly* (Mar. 1863), 72. One Northerner wrote, “The products of the south have been so far kept from us, as to place those that do reach to us, at prices unknown for many years,

(FIG. 31) Lithographer John Smith Tholey captured this change in the print, “Reconstruction of the South,” which showed a picturesque landscape with clear skies, rolling hillsides, and fertile grasses. Tholey also depicted an irrigated canal and barrel of wheat in the foreground of the print that signified the renewed productivity of Southern farming. Upon closer look, viewers realize that the tools used to water the grasses and harvest the wheat in this depiction are actually made from war canons and swords. Tholey’s lithograph echoed the words of Marshall P. Wilder, president of the American Pomological Society, who wished for the day when American fields would welcome peace instead of swords and canons. Wilder told the American Pomological Society in 1862:

...We fondly cling to the hope that the day is coming yet, when war shall wash his bloody hand and sheath his glittering sword,—when our fields shall no longer be ploughed with the deadly cannon, or fertilized with the blood of our bretheren,—and when peace shall again wreath her olive leaves around these distracted States, and bind them together in one great circle of life and love.<sup>183</sup>

Tholey’s print captured Wilder’s hope for fields fertilized by peace in place of blood.

Tholey also expanded upon this vision by including a portrait of George Peabody—a pioneer of Southern education who established dozens of industrial colleges throughout the South. Imagery of America after the Civil War reveals how agriculture figured deeply in the physical and emotional reorganization of the South.

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if ever in the history of the country.” William Bacon, “The War and Agriculture” *Country Gentleman* (Mar. 1864).

<sup>182</sup> Future research will consider how this legislation, and the push to transform Florida wilderness into a civilized fruit garden, supported the larger national agenda to remove Native Americans onto reservations.

<sup>183</sup> Marshall P. Wilder, *Address Delivered at the Ninth Session of the American Pomological Society Held in Boston, M.A.* (Boston: McIntire and Moulton Printers, Sept. 17-19, 1862), 6. Wilder appropriated this quote about transforming swords into plows from a biblical passage in the Book of Isaiah 2:4.

Tholey's lithograph also taps into the racial ramifications of reconstruction. This is evident in Tholey's depiction of Black and White men uniting in one landscape to commemorate the closing of the Civil War. While the White men in this print salute Reconstruction by standing tall and hoisting swords into the air, the African-American men in this print honor Reconstruction by kneeling on the ground and raising their hands to the sky. Tholey's print was no doubt inspired by earlier brochures that similarly showed African Americans kneeling on the ground, waving their hands in the air to celebrate emancipation. (FIG. 32) The 1863 print *Freedom to the Slave* is one of many examples that portrayed African Americans in a crouched position, stooping below White figures to express gratitude for their help in securing Black freedom.<sup>184</sup> Kirk Savage asserts that such imagery unfairly depicted African Americans as inactive, helpless victims who were dependent on White Americans for liberation.<sup>185</sup> These images also denied the bravery of African Americans who courageously resisted slavery and oppression. Tholey's print further minimized the accomplishments of African Americans by placing them in the lowest register of the composition, far away from markers of progress such as the speeding train in the background. By reproducing the visual logic of emancipation imagery for his print, Tholey honored the advancements of Reconstruction while keeping older systems of racism in place.

While emblems of wheat and water visualized agricultural renewal in Tholey's print, it would have been fitting to include oranges in his picture as well since the cultivation of tropical fruit too contributed to the revival of Southern agriculture. Orange

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<sup>184</sup> Josiah Wedgewood's representation "Am I Not a Man and a Brother" is one of the earliest representations of African Americans on bended knee, pleading for the abolition of slavery.

<sup>185</sup> Kirk Savage uses the example of Thomas Ball's 1876 sculpture, *Freedman's Memorial to Abraham Lincoln*, in his book: *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 86.

cultivation, in fact, gained widespread attention after the Civil War, threatening to surpass the South's production of cotton, tobacco, and sugar. A.J. Harris, a member of the Florida Fruit Growers Association, described the post-war excitement for Florida oranges, saying:

In former times when our people's whole time and attention was engrossed in cotton and sugar culture, fruit-growing was looked upon rather with contempt, and the wild orange groves were not valued any higher than the same quality of other timbered lands. Many of the finest wild groves were cut down and destroyed to make room for cotton and sugar culture, but of late years a new era has dawned upon our people, and they have been awakened to the importance and profits of tropical fruit culture, and now these wild groves are highly prized and many of them have been and are being converted into sweet groves.<sup>186</sup>

Harris observes a shift in attitude among Southerners who now prized oranges groves that were once demolished for the cultivation of cotton and sugar.<sup>187</sup> This change in outlook was so dramatic that Harris described it as an "awakening" in which farmers suddenly discovered the economic importance of orange cultivation. Horticulturists piggybacked on the excitement for oranges, predicting that "the golden apple" would soon dismantle the cotton curtain and serve as the leading agricultural industry of Florida.<sup>188</sup> In the minds of many Americans, orange cultivation promised to draw money and people to Florida.

Unlike cotton which was widely known to divide Northerners and Southerners during the Civil War and benefit a small group of elite planters, the cultivation of oranges

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<sup>186</sup> *Proceedings of the Florida Fruit-Growers' Association and its Annual Meeting*, 28.

<sup>187</sup> Helen Warner also noted how "It is very hard to understand how it is that the native Floridian did not long ago wake up to the realization of the wealth within his grasp, of the golden apple lying neglected at his feet...there were a few intelligent, wide-awake Southerners who held the orange at an approximate to its true value." Warner, 12-13.

<sup>188</sup> An author in *Semi-Tropical* advocated for the diversification of agriculture in the South, saying "the whole Southern country to-day needs, more than all things else, a broader culture both in the field and in the school. This accomplished together with an entire revolution of her old-time intolerance and exclusiveness, and her road to independence and importance will be found both broad and easy." *Semi Tropical* 2.2 (Feb 1876), 9-10.

was believed to foster unity and equality. This is evident in a Florida immigration brochure that requested fruit growers in all areas of the country to migrate South, stating: “immigrants wanted: we want population from every state in the union, and from every country in Europe, we will give immigrants a hearty welcome, we want especially persons skilled in gardening and fruit growing.”<sup>189</sup> A farmer from Arkansas similarly pleaded: “let the heretofore slave states be filled with enterprising, industrious, and Union-loving people!”<sup>190</sup> The cultivation of fruit brought together Northern and Southern farmers in the same way that grape cultivation brought together soldiers on both sides of the Mason Dixon line.<sup>191</sup> Stories about Union soldiers rejecting military orders to destroy Florida’s orange groves during the Civil War demonstrated how fruit could be a cipher for peace and reunion.<sup>192</sup> Invitations for European immigrants to cultivate fruit in Florida are especially striking at a time when many Americans disliked the number of European immigrants flooding the country. Such gestures of inclusivity perhaps signal more liberal attitudes towards foreigners in the South, or a sheer desperation for fruit growers from all regions.<sup>193</sup> Oranges thus served the cause of reunification by joining Northern, Southern, and European farmers around the economic interest of fruit.

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<sup>189</sup> *Semi Tropical Florida* (Chicago: Rand, McNally and Co., 1881), 12.

<sup>190</sup> J. H. Carleton, El Dorado, Arkansas in *The Grape Culturist*, (Aug. 1869), 336.

<sup>191</sup> Chapter one of this text references a story about Northern and Southern adversaries uniting over grapes in the article “Horticulture and War” *Country Gentleman* (March 19, 1863), 195.

<sup>192</sup> This story was told in Edward King’s series of articles, “The Great South.” King describes how a Union soldier in Palatka, Florida, “could not find it in his heart to ruin Dr. Moragné’s beautiful grove; so he picketed his cavalry there, and evaded the order.” King, *The Great South: A Record of Journeys in Louisiana, Texas, the Indian Territory, Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland* (Hartford: American Publishing Co., 1875), 404.

<sup>193</sup> This spirit of inclusivity, however, did not extend to everyone. More research needs to be conducted on the ways in which fruit and land cultivation in Florida excluded Native Americans and accelerated the national mission to remove Native Americans onto reservations.

Tourist literature from the late-nineteenth century also accelerated interest in Florida oranges. Edward King's travel diary, "The Great South," was one of the most popular pieces of tourist literature in the era of Reconstruction that *Scribner's Weekly* published as a wider series. In one of his articles, King devoted an entire section to the prolific orange grove of Colonel Hubbard Hart in Palatka, Florida, which possessed 700 trees that "annually bear an enormous crop of the golden fruit."<sup>194</sup> (FIG. 33)

Accompanying King's article was an illustration by James Wells Champney that showed a couple standing at the entrance of Hart's orange grove. The picture forms the shape of a keyhole that suggested oranges could provide entrance to a world of happiness and profit. Other illustrations in King's articles showed orange pickers standing on the tallest heights of ladders, plucking fruits from trees overflowing with the colorful orbs. (FIG. 34) Such images were not created in a vacuum; they belonged to a much larger bank of pictures in Southern literature that used the orange picker as a visual shorthand for the promise and possibility of Florida fruit. King, like other travel writers, carefully crafted representations of Florida oranges to direct money and people to the state.

Although literature on Florida oranges targeted mostly men with professional interests in horticulture, a number of articles also targeted women in the late-nineteenth century. As early as 1860, *Godey's Lady's Magazine* featured articles about Florida that claimed the state "is destined to become the Italy of America," where fruits "can be cultivated with but little trouble."<sup>195</sup> In the 1880s and '90s, *Godey's* published more detailed advertisements for Florida real estate, including the following:

40x100 feet, in Silver Springs Park, Fla. High, dry land. No swamps or malaria. Town only 5 months old. 67 Houses, 2 Hotels, 1 Church and 3 Stores. Population, 219; new

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid, 402.

<sup>195</sup> "A Voice From Florida," *Godey's Lady's Book* (Jul. 1868).

arrivals weekly; 6 daily trains; over 2,600 merchants and professional people of every kind, also ladies, have already invested. List of names free. Every man and woman should own a lot in the land of *oranges*, lemons, bananas, pineapples, sunshine, tropical scenery, and health. *A popular and shrewd investment*. Prices will soon be doubled.<sup>196</sup>

Such advertisements were incredibly thorough, describing the number of churches, stores, hotels, and houses that circled each lot. Descriptions of the town's resources would have been an important selling point for women readers looking to move to a developed, family-friendly town. Reports that "ladies have already invested" in Florida real estate would have also provided assurance to readers thinking about migrating to Florida. Advertisers in Florida were wise to appeal to women since they were now legally empowered to purchase land with the passing of the Homestead Act. Unlike years earlier when women had little financial or legal ability to purchase a home, the Homestead Act allowed women, immigrants, and ex-slaves "loyal" to the union to purchase Southern land at cheap prices. Advertisements for Florida in women's magazines shed new light on the ways that women participated in Southern expansion.<sup>197</sup>

Another way in which women's magazines publicized Florida was by publishing recipes featuring Florida ingredients. Recipes for "Florida Orange Marmalade," "Florida Orange Wine," "Florida Orange Jelly," and "Florida Orange Cake" all encouraged women readers to make meals inspired by Florida food-fare.<sup>198</sup> Incorporating Florida foods into classic American recipes helped assimilate Florida ingredients into Northern meals and diets. What better way to fold the South back into the Union than to literally fold Southern foods into traditional American recipes. Considering that most of these

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<sup>196</sup> "Florida House Lots, Only \$15" *Godey's Lady's Book* (1886): 644.

<sup>197</sup> Helen Warner's horticultural manual on citrus cultivation also shows how women contributed to Southern expansion by authoring manuals on Florida fruit. Helen Warner, *Florida Fruits and How to Raise Them* (Louisville: John Morton and Co., 1886).

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 312, 314; *Women's Philadelphia Centennial Cookbook* in the collection of the Winterthur Library, (1876): 262, 298, 306; George Davis, *A Treatise on the Culture of the Orange and Other Citrus Fruits* (Jacksonville: Charles Dacosta, 1882): 86-88.

recipes constituted desserts made their assimilation that much sweeter. (FIG. 35) To complete the meal, women could display their Florida orange cake next to the numerous souvenir sets of saucers shaped and colored like an orange.<sup>199</sup> (FIG. 36) Orange spoons were specifically designed for handling this Florida fruit, displaying orange imagery in the head of the spoon rather than the handle, thereby creating a double experience of consuming the fruit in both physical and visual form.<sup>200</sup> Florida recipes, saucers, and silverware thus held broader political implications for the incorporation of Florida in the late-nineteenth century.

### **Post-Marked Flowers and Painted Souvenirs: Florida Art, Oranges, and Tourism**

Northerners more literally helped incorporate Florida back into the Union by moving south after the Civil War and taking advantage of the cheap land granted by the Homestead Acts.<sup>201</sup> The Northern influence in the South became so profound that George Barbour described Florida as a “Northern colony,” in which “nearly all the railroads, steamboats, mills, factories, and the like, are directly or indirectly the product

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<sup>199</sup> Similar china could have been made by C.E. Wheelock and John H. Roth, two companies that marketed their chinawares throughout Florida. Both businesses imported their china from Germany and Austria until World War I. Larry Roberts, *Florida's Golden Age of Souvenirs: 1890-1930* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 23-24.

<sup>200</sup> Oranges were also visible in wax displays of fruit, which involved a complex process of waxing, soaking, and sculpting an orange mold per instructions from an 1856 article in *Godey's Lady's Book*. The end result was an “orange [that] will be found perfect in form, and of a natural color.” “The Art of Making Wax Fruit and Flowers. Second Process—Casting the Fruit,” *Godey's Lady's Book* (Apr. 1856).

<sup>201</sup> The Homestead Acts were passed at the expense of Southern landowners. Paul Gates explains how “There was no better way to disenfranchise ex-confederates than by taking power away from southern leaders, confiscating southern properties, and preventing them from acquiring new lands. Some northerners even bought land in the South to keep them out of competition with northern agricultural and timber businesses.” Gates, “Federal Land Policy in the South: 1866-1888,” *The Journal of Southern History* 6.3 (Aug. 1940), 305-306, 327.



of New England or New York brain-work and capital.”<sup>202</sup> One way in which Northerners transformed the South was by “clearing large tracts of fertile soil, setting out orange groves, experimenting with new crops...and erecting...fruit-preserving establishments.”<sup>203</sup> By installing new technologies in Florida, Barbour praised Northern migrants for “developing the true resources” of the state and “civilizing this entire region.”<sup>204</sup> It is meaningful that Barbour includes citrus cultivation as part of this larger civilizing program. This attitude towards orange culture reinforces how citrus cultivation was not merely a Northern hobby but a political strategy to colonize the Florida landscape. Historian Frieda Knobloch explains how agriculture in general is an “intensely social enterprise” in which the whole system of domesticating, transforming, and improving nature structures social and political life.<sup>205</sup> Orange cultivation, too, structured political life in Florida, helping to transform Florida into a Northern settlement.

(FIG. 37) The most famous Northern crusader for Florida oranges was Harriet Beecher Stowe, who purchased a cottage and orange grove in Mandarin, Florida that spanned 30 acres overlooking the St. Johns River.<sup>206</sup> Stowe described her new summer home in a letter, stating: “I have started a large orange plantation and the region around will soon be a continuous orange grove planted by northern settlers and employing

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<sup>202</sup> Barbour, 296.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Frieda Knobloch, *The Culture of Wilderness: Agriculture As Colonization in the American West*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 3.

<sup>206</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, “Florida Again,” *Hearth and Home* (May 15, 1869), 328. An article in *Semi-Tropical* described Stowe’s cottage: “The house is of a dark brown color, of very moderate cottage size, wholly unpretending in appearance and quite inexpensive. The chief feature of her place, as seen from the river, is its magnificent towering shade-trees...they attract and fasten the eyes of all by their unusual size and beauty. Their wide-spread and over-shadowing branches give an air of seclusion and dignity to the quiet home beneath.” *Semi-Tropical* 2.2 (Feb. 1876), 91-92.

colored laborers.”<sup>207</sup> Stowe grouped herself with other Northern migrants who she considered to be a “healthy, hardy energetic” people “applying the habits...and industries of New England to the development of the Floridian soil.”<sup>208</sup> She encouraged other Northerners to move to Florida as well by describing the joys of living on an orange grove in a series of articles entitled, “Palmetto Leaves.”<sup>209</sup> Stowe declared that anyone can easily move south and start their own orange grove, pleading, “To all who want warmth, repose, ease, freedom from care...come! Come! Come sit in our veranda! This fine land is now in the market so cheap that the opportunity for investment should not be neglected.”<sup>210</sup> Readers would have been compelled to move south after learning in *The Christian Recorder* that Stowe yielded an astounding profit of \$1500 a year from her orange grove.<sup>211</sup> Articles about Stowe’s orange grove sought to rally “Yankee gardeners” and “North Pole-ites” into buying Florida land.

Because Stowe was such a cheerleader for Florida oranges, it makes sense that she painted several still lifes of the fruit during her winter residencies in Florida. (FIG. 38) One of her largest still lifes—*Orange Fruit and Blossoms*—is also her most unusual. Instead of painting fruit on a traditional horizontal axis like most American still-life

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<sup>207</sup> “Letter to Elizabeth Georgiana Campbell” (May 28, 1877) BK48 Kirkham Papers in the Harriet Beecher Stowe House Archives.

<sup>208</sup> “Letter to Mary Estlin” (Dec. 21, 1868) BK 31 Kirkham Papers in the Harriet Beecher Stowe House Archives. Stowe also said, “Since the war, this land has been rapidly taken up by young enterprising men from the Northern States, who are clearing it up for the planting of orange and lemon groves, and of peach and almond orchards, and of vineyards.” “Amateur Missionaries for Florida” *Christian Union* (May 21, 1870), 323. For other anecdotes about Northern labor in Florida, see: “Under the Orange-Trees,” *Hearth and Home* (Apr. 10, 1869), 248.

<sup>209</sup> *Palmetto Leaves* was published in the nondenominational New York newspaper, *Christian Union*, purchased by her brother Henry War Beecher. Stowe and her siblings contributed to the newspaper weekly, which was widely read after its first printing in 1870. John and Sarah Foster, *Calling Yankees to Florida: Harriet Beecher Stowe's Forgotten Tourist Articles* (Cocoa: The Florida Historical Society Press, 2011), 88.

<sup>210</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, “Southern Christmas and New Year,” *Christian Union* 13.3 (Jan. 3, 1876), 144.

<sup>211</sup> “Personal,” *The Christian Recorder* (Dec. 21, 1882).

paintings, Stowe painted oranges on a vertical trajectory that shows oranges climbing up a tall bough. White orange blossoms dangle from tree branches like jewelry—a fitting metaphor since Stowe described the budding of orange blossoms as “the week of pearls.”<sup>212</sup> With clusters of oranges permeating the picture plane, Stowe’s still-life painting bursts with saturated color. Perhaps Stowe painted this canvas in February of 1880 when she wrote in a letter that “my part this winter has been painting orange trees as they look in our back lot loaded with clusters of oranges, green and ripe and with blossoms...I have painted them as they look against a blue sky.”<sup>213</sup> Stowe believed that painting and cultivating fruit was the perfect hobby for women and “a great domestic exercise that will tend to secure their health and vigor of constitution.”<sup>214</sup> In her advice manual, *The American Woman’s Home*, Stowe specifically encouraged mothers to introduce daughters to the polite activity of cultivation, saying, “Let them plant fruits and flowers and make their small Edens.”<sup>215</sup> The painting, planting, and cooking of fruit all

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<sup>212</sup> “Palmetto Leaves from Florida, Swamps and Orange-Trees” *The Christian Union* (Mar. 25, 1872).

<sup>213</sup> “Letter to Susan Lee Warner,” (Feb. 16, 1880) BK 53. She may have painted this scene from the view of her window since she said in a letter, “a great orange tree hung with golden balls closes the prospect from my window. The tree is about thirty feet high, and its leaves fairly glisten in the sunshine.” “Letter to Oliver Wendell Holmes, (Jan. 1, 1879). Stowe may have also referenced this painting in a letter by writing: “I am painting a great panel of orange trees blossoms and fruit which I am going to sell for the benefit of our Church here—that is about all I have done in that line.” “Letter to M. Bucklin Claflin,” BK58 (Mar. 6, 1882). Stowe, in fact, painted several images of oranges, writing in a letter to Charles Edward Stowe, “My orange panel is finished and is better than the one I did last year we all think (Apr. 28, 1881 BK 56). Stowe also painted oranges on a fan, writing in a letter: “I wanted to send Mary a fan for the occasion of my own painting with orange blossoms on a blue satin ground and Hatty went to Jacksonville to look up the fan, but found that there was nothing suitable to be found there and as I could not get any Chinese white there either I have concluded that I must send Marys fan to her after marriage...I painted one for Dot Bullock, which found honorable mention alongside of the diamonds and other splendid gifts at her wedding.” “Letter to Mary Bucklin Claflin,” BK56a (May, 12, 1881).

<sup>214</sup> Catherine Ester Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *American Woman's Home: Or, Principles of Domestic Science* (New York: J.B. Ford, 1869): 295.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*

created a socially acceptable space for middle-class women in the nineteenth century to study the science of planting—an activity that typically belonged to men. While Stowe's still-life practice falls in line with traditional gender norms, she also deviates from convention by painting oranges from a grove that she, as a woman, was unique for owning in this time period.

In addition to still lifes of oranges, Stowe painted Florida lilies, jasmine, golden rod, and magnolia flowers that decorated the walls of her home in Hartford, Connecticut. (FIG. 39) Still lifes of magnolia flowers may have been among her favorite since she described them as “giants among flowers...worthy to be trees of Heaven.”<sup>216</sup> Stowe described the process of painting magnolias over time, noting how after three days, “our beautiful fairy had changed in the night to an ugly brownie. The petals, so waxen fair the night before, had become a mahogany color...The history of that magnolia was finished. We had seen it unfold and die.”<sup>217</sup> Stowe, like many still-life painters before her, treated the representation of flowers as meditations on life and death. She considered magnolias so fragile that she advised visitors in Florida to refrain from sending them up North in the mail, explaining that “it is far better to view the flowers ever fresh and blooming through imagination, than to receive a desolate, faded, crumpled remnant by mail.”<sup>218</sup> Stowe insisted that post-marked and painted representations of Florida flowers could not match the experience of seeing them in person. She felt similarly about Florida oranges, saying they bore no resemblance to citrus fruits in the North that are “pithy, wilted, and sour” and “have not even a suggestion of what those golden balls are that weight down...yonder

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<sup>216</sup> “Palmetto Leaves from Florida, A Letter to the Girls,” *Christian Union* (Feb., 28 1872).

<sup>217</sup> “Palmetto Leaves from Florida, Magnolia Week,” *Christian Union* (May 15, 1872), 417.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*

tree.”<sup>219</sup> By demanding that Northerners see and taste Florida’s treasures firsthand, Stowe once again helped recruit Northern migrants and tourists to the South.<sup>220</sup>

Few scholars have investigated Stowe’s painting practice, which adds an important dimension to her political life in Florida. Stowe, after all, devoted much of her time to painting and was “constantly employed, from nine in the morning till after dark at night, in taking lessons of a painting and drawing master.”<sup>221</sup> In addition to distributing her work to friends and family, Stowe exhibited her paintings in at least one exhibition in Hartford.<sup>222</sup> She cited Renaissance and Dutch painting as artistic inspiration,<sup>223</sup> as well as more contemporary lithographers such as Louis Prang whose chromolithographs she recommended for display in the home.”<sup>224</sup> (FIG. 40) Stowe may have specifically found

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<sup>219</sup> “Palmetto Leaves from Florida, No.2” *Christian Union* (Jan. 24, 1872), 156.

<sup>220</sup> Like still-life paintings of food, still-life paintings of flowers possess their own visual language and cultural symbolism. Still-life representations of flowers warrant further investigation from scholars, but the following researchers have significantly helped to grow the field: Ellen Foshay, “Charles Darwin and the Development of American Floral Imagery,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 15.4 (1980): 305-314; Elaine Scarry, “Imagining Flowers: Perceptual Mimesis” *Representations* 57 (Winter 1997): 90-115; Nancy Strow Sheley, “Taking Up the Gauntlet: George Henry Hall’s Raspberries” *American Art* 19.3 (Fall 2005) 82-91; and Nancy Siegel, *Petal Pushers: Women, Botany, and the American Landscape* (forthcoming).

<sup>221</sup> Her training in painting was so intense that she allowed herself “only an intermission long enough to swallow a little dinner.” “Letter to Roxana Ward Foote” (Jan. 3, 1828). Stowe had a sense of humor about her amateur artistic talent. In the same letter, she wrote, “I propose my dear grandmamma, to send you by the first opportunity a dish of fruit of my own painting. Pray do not now devour it in anticipation, for I cannot promise that you will not find it sadly tasteless in reality.”

<sup>222</sup> In a letter to Marie Collings and Mrs. Caleb Strong, Stowe wrote: “I understand you are on the committee for our Hartford Centennial exhibition. Three of my pictures are there and I went to put them under your special guardianship to have returned to their places when the exhibition is over. They are the Magnolia, the Yellow Jessamine, and the Good Shepherd which I bought on the artist’s easel at Dusseldorf years ago and prize like gold.” BK46 (Nov. 1, 1875).

<sup>223</sup> Stowe wrote: “I always did admire the gorgeous and solemn mysteries of [Rembr’s] coloring. Rembrandt is like Hawthorne, he chooses simple and every-day objects, and so arranges light and shadow as to give them a somber richness and mysterious gloom.” *Flowers and Fruit from Writings of Harriett Beecher Stowe* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1888): 166.

<sup>224</sup> Stowe, in fact, defended Prang against art critic Clarence Cook who wrote a scathing review of chromolithography and other forms of “low art” in “What Pictures Shall I Hang on My Walls?” *Atlantic Almanac* (1869). Prang was appreciative of Stowe’s support, saying “We feel proud of her kind, unsought, and unexpected compliments to our chromos...” Louis Prang, *Prang’s*

inspiration in Prang's still life of magnolia flowers since she nearly replicated his picture of budding flowers cradled by a bed of leaves in her painting, *Magnolia Grandiflora*, which shared Prang's title. Using the flower's botanical title made it seem as if Stowe and Prang were explorers in the South, documenting Florida's flora and fauna for an anthropological survey. At a time when Florida was being explored and colonized by Northerners, this anthropological approach to Florida flowers does not seem accidental. Stowe's paintings of Florida flowers and fruits, therefore, were more than mere decorations in the home; they were endorsements for exploring "the land of orange and vine."

While Stowe's still lifes would have been seen by a limited social circle in the North, the Florida still-life paintings of artist Martin Johnson Heade reached a much wider audience. Unlike Thomas Moran or Winslow Homer who only briefly visited Florida to paint snapshots of the landscape, Heade was one of the few Northern artists to settle in the state and paint its fruit and flowers until his death.<sup>225</sup> Heade's time in St. Augustine arguably marks the gilded age of his still-life career since he painted more than 150 paintings of fruit and flowers in Florida. (FIG. 41) Between 1883 and 1895, Heade painted nearly a dozen still lifes of oranges and oranges blossoms sitting tenderly next to one another on the ledge of a table, bound together by a single branch. Heade depicted the fruit and its blossoms in the most vibrant stages of life, in full bloom with a number of buds on the brink of flowering. White orange blossoms delicately form the shape of

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*Chromo: A Journal of Popular Art* (Boston: Prang and Co., 1868). Stowe also mentioned Prang in a letter, writing: "Prang has printed some little illuminated text cards that I think would be just the thing for your Easter presents." "Letter to Henry Allen" BK28 (Feb. 11, 1867).

<sup>225</sup> George Inness and Albert Bierstadt are two other famous American artists who visited Florida briefly. For his contribution to Florida art, Heade was inducted to the Florida Artists Hall of Fame in 1995.

five-pointed stars that add to the sweetness of his paintings. Heade's depiction of oranges on velvet tablecloths and mahogany tables also conjured a picture of luxury. Their placement on mahogany—an expensive product in the late-nineteenth century made from vanishing resources in the Tropics—was an especially bold statement of luxury that shattered descriptions of Florida as a cultural wasteland.<sup>226</sup> In a nation that believed the cultivation of fruit reflected the cultivation of society, Heade's pictures of blossoming flowers on polished tables spoke to the polished, blossoming culture of Florida.

Heade was not the only artist to find inspiration in the nation's oranges. (FIG. 42) In the same time period, William McCloskey painted hyper-realistic still lifes of oranges gliding on wooden tables. McCloskey relished in the challenge of painting a polished, licked surface, showing the glowing reflections of oranges on mahogany tabletops. Above the wooden surface, McCloskey painted the fruit shuffling in tissue paper that flaunted his mastery of trompe l'oeil painting: the artistic rendering of texture in a two dimensional space. Trompe l'oeil painting was made famous by Pliny the Elder's story of Greek artist Zeuxis, who painted a trompe l'oeil picture of grapes so realistic that Parrhsios, a competing artist, reached out to touch the canvas, believing the fruit to be real. Fruit, as a result, was mythologized in ancient history as an object with which to deceive painters and viewers. A number of American artists in the nineteenth century continued to experiment with trompe l'oeil in paintings of oranges; its bulbous shape and

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<sup>226</sup> Jennifer L. Anderson, *Mahogany: The Cost of Luxury in Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 304-306. Orange trees also provided another source of wood at this time, used to make a variety of objects including canes and picture frames. Roberts, 141.

pulsating color could inspire the sensations of smell and taste.<sup>227</sup> McCloskey added another sensory component to his paintings by wrapping oranges in crisp, white tissue paper that clings to the fruit's curves in the manner of wet drapery—another ancient Greco-Roman tradition.<sup>228</sup> Oranges, as result, provided artists like McCloskey an opportunity to showcase their facility in painting and insert themselves into a legacy of the world's most historic painters.

While his painting technique may be ancient, McCloskey's depictions of oranges wrapped in tissue paper showcased the modernization of American agriculture in the late-nineteenth century. Tissue paper, indeed, was a new packaging material that shippers used to prevent the fruit from bruising and spoiling along the transcontinental journey. Laborers were given specific instructions on how to pluck and pack oranges in tissue paper:

Cut the stem close to the orange, handle in boxes not containing more than 75-100, let moisture escape from the rind for 5 days, then pluck it directly with the hand, no knife necessary, wrap each orange individually in tissue paper with no oil, mark the box with the number of oranges and type of fruit.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> There are a number of reasons why American artists experimented with *tromp l'oeil* painting at this time. One motivation might have been to distinguish their still-life paintings from two dimensional chromolithographs, which were considered cheap imitations of paintings and “mere illusions of art” by art critic Clarence Cook. In light of Wendy Bellion's research on *tromp l'oeil* painting and its use in refining viewers' ability to distinguish fiction from reality and deceitfulness from honesty, *tromp l'oeil* paintings of fruit might have been another exercise to hone viewers' skills in discernment. This seems likely since there were many reports in the mid-nineteenth century about the corruption of orchardists who sold fruits and seeds that looked healthy but did not meet the standards of farmers. *Tromp l'oeil* painting, in this sense, may have been another avenue for viewers to exercise good judgment. Wendy Bellion, *Citizen Spectator: Art, Illusion, and Visual Perception in Early National America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Cheryl Lyon-Jenness, “Planting a Seed: The Nineteenth-Century Horticultural Boom in America,” *The Business History Review* 78.3 (Autumn 2004): 381-421.

<sup>228</sup> Raab discusses the sexual undertones of this painting and the relationship of oranges to the human body in her article, “Wrapped Oranges: Portrait of a Still Life,” *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* 6.3 (Summer 2006): 12-14.

<sup>229</sup> Reverend T. W. Moore, *Treatise and Hand-book on Orange Culture in Florida* (Jacksonville: Sun and Press, 1877), 140-142.



Eventually, oranges were completely obscured by tissue paper, cellophane, and cardboard containers that caused citrus distributors to print their brand on the fruit's external packaging. (In the twentieth century, Sunkist would become the master of citrus branding by printing their name on wrappers and crates that revolutionized the way fruit was advertised.)<sup>230</sup> McCloskey's still-life painting reflected the modernization of fruit distribution that diverged from earlier still lifes featuring fruit in more traditional wicker baskets, wooden nests, or on the grassy ground of an outdoor landscape.

Where McCloskey painted tissue paper, Heade painted leaves and blossoms in still lifes of oranges. It is significant that Heade painted oranges without their shipping outfit since he would have frequently seen oranges wrapped in tissue paper as a resident near Jacksonville, Florida: one of the nation's biggest citrus distributors. Orange shipments were in such high demand at the time of Heade's painting that agriculturist Reverend T.W. Moore advocated for daily orange trains from the American South to the Northwest.<sup>231</sup> Heade, however, declined to portray the rush of orange shipments, instead showing oranges freshly picked from the grove with their branches and leaves still intact. Perhaps Heade's decision to disguise the modernization of oranges falls in line with his wider political beliefs to preserve Florida's flora and fauna in the wake of industrialization. Heade protested the environmental damages of industrialization in a series of articles under the pseudonym, "Didymous," for the periodical *Forest and Stream*. He may have communicated these same environmental philosophies in his

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<sup>230</sup> Sackman, *Orange Empire: California and the Fruits of Eden*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 96-98, 150.

<sup>231</sup> Moore, 143.

landscape and still-life paintings that obscure the realities of mass production.<sup>232</sup> Perhaps these oranges were personally grown by the artist who took “great pride and pleasure in his own citrus trees,” regularly discussing them in letters to Eben Loomis and Frederic Edwin Church.<sup>233</sup> Heade painted oranges with such “fidelity to truth”<sup>234</sup> that one critic was able to identify the Navel orange variety of fruit in his paintings.<sup>235</sup> In rendering every stem and stamen of the orange blossom with taxonomical detail, Heade conveyed a more personalized view of the fruit that denied their mass production in factories at this time period.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Heade’s placement of fruits and flowers on mahogany tables, however, disturb this theory since mahogany was a rare wood extracted at the expense of tropical rainforests. More information on Heade’s environmental views can be gained from the Master’s Thesis by Susan C. Riles, *Martin Johnson Heade: Wetlands Artist and Pro Environmentalist* (Winter Park: Rollins College, 2005) and Margaret Cao’s dissertation, *Episodes at the End of Landscape: Hudson River School to American Modernism* from Harvard University. Susan Riles specifically believes it is possible that many of Heade’s landscape paintings “promote environmentalism by raising the awareness of the wetlands natural beauty and by showing the interrelationship of the elements within ecosystems.” Riles, 71.

<sup>233</sup> Christopher Benfey, *A Summer of Hummingbirds: Love, Art, and Scandal in the Intersecting Worlds of Emily Dickinson, Mark Twain, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Martin Johnson Heade*. New York: Penguin, 2006): 226; Favis, 69, 76 ft. 28.

<sup>234</sup> Cited by Roberta Favis, *Martin Johnson Heade in Florida*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003): 71.

<sup>235</sup> One critic said, “Mr. Heade has several beautiful studies of orange blossoms, with their thick, waxy petals; one with two specimens of the navel orange is especially fine. “Ponce de Leon Studios” *Florida Tatler* (Feb. 5 1898): 5. Another reference to Navel oranges in Heade’s work can be seen in the same newspaper on March 23, 1901, p7.

<sup>236</sup> If we consider Heade’s still-life paintings of oranges as a subtle reaction to industrialization, perhaps his still lifes of Cherokee roses also challenged Florida expansion and its threat to the landscape and indigenous people of Florida. Cherokee roses, after all, carried poignant meaning in the late nineteenth century, relating to the Trail of Tears that described the removal of Native Americans from their property onto government-controlled reservations. According to popular myth, Native-American mothers cried so deeply over the displacement of their families that they prayed for a sign that would elevate their spirits and give them strength to endure the emotional stress. The next day, a Cherokee rose began to grow where the mothers’ tears fell, symbolizing the sadness of Native-American mothers who mourned dislocated family members. The rose’s gold center was believed to symbolize the gold stolen from Cherokee lands, while the seven leaves of each flower represented the seven clans of the Cherokee nation. It is unclear whether Heade—or artists Ellen Robinson and Felix de Crano who also painted the Cherokee Rose—would have considered the flower’s relationship to Florida’s expansion. The relationship

Reports of Heade churning out still-life paintings for tourists, however, contradict the intimate nature of the artist's still lifes. Theodore Stebbins explained that if a flower still life by Heade "was sold, he would doubtless paint a similar picture to replace it."<sup>237</sup> Another article likened Heade's still-life paintings to souvenirs, explaining that "Mr. Heade's most popular pictures, today, are of orange blossoms and Cherokee roses, typical of Florida [and] making beautiful souvenirs of a visit to the State."<sup>238</sup> Heade's studio, in this sense, functioned like a painting factory that reproduced still lifes like souvenirs for consumers. It is not surprising that Heade churned out still lifes for Northern tourists given that he seriously considered the image of Florida in the Northern imagination. Heade hoped that people would "flock down" to Florida in the winter upon learning that

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between still-life imagery and the cultivation of fruit and flowers on former Native-American territory warrants deeper investigation.

It also seems meaningful that Heade painted the subject of Cherokee roses in St. Augustine where Native Americans were famously imprisoned at Fort Marion just five years earlier. Under the supervision of Lieutenant Richard Pratt, Native-American prisoners produced artworks that sold widely to tourists visiting this ancient city. Even though Heade moved to St. Augustine years after the prisoners were released, he (along with artists J. Wells Champney, Edward Townsend and Frank Taylor) surely knew about the artist-prisoners who lived behind the gates of Fort Marion. Heade might have been especially tuned into the history of Native Americans in St. Augustine since his friend, Harriet Beecher Stowe, was an advocate for Native-American rights and patron of the Native artist-prisoner, Zotom. Though Fort Marion held no Cherokee prisoners, it might have been difficult for Heade to separate the Cherokee rose from its chilling symbolism. Perhaps Heade diluted the symbolism of the Cherokee rose in his paintings for sale to industrialists like Henry Flagler, who purchased pictures of this subject by Heade. Stebbins, 153; Thomas Graham, *Mr. Flagler's St. Augustine* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014). For more information on the prisoners at Fort Marion, see: Joyce Szabo, *Imprisoned Art/Complex Patronage: Plains Drawings by Howling Wolf and Zotom at the Autry National Center* (Sante Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2011).

<sup>237</sup> Stebbins, on the other hand, believes that there was little demand for Heade's paintings of Florida oranges, since two of his orange still lifes went unsold and evidently remained in the artist's family throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century. Theodore Stebbins, *The Life and Work of Martin Johnson Heade: A Critical Analysis and Catalogue Raisonne*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 156, 170.

<sup>238</sup> *Florida Tatler* (Mar. 23, 1901): 7; cited by Theodore Stebbins, 163.

“it was leavened with the comforts of Northern enterprise.”<sup>239</sup> He wrote in a letter to friend John Russell Bartlett that:

The great obstacle in the way of settling this place rapidly has been the difficulty of getting here and the atrociously kept ho—‘ but both the difficulties are about to be removed. A new rr. (railroad) has just been opened direct from Jacksonville and...everything now is nicely arranged to make St. Augustine by far the most attractive winter resort in Florida.<sup>240</sup>

Heade’s writings reveal how the artist was invested in transforming Florida into a tourist attraction. He would have been especially tuned into the development of Florida since his social circle included Northern artists, abolitionists, and entrepreneurs committed to improving Florida tourism. Heade, in fact, was close friends the most enthusiastic ambassador for Florida oranges and tourism: Harriett Beecher Stowe.<sup>241</sup> It was in the context of Florida tourism that Heade painted idyllic images of Florida fruits and flowers.

(FIG. 43) As representatives of Florida, Heade’s still-life paintings were a natural choice for display in the “Florida Building,” one of the most popular destinations at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. For this monumental fair in which 200 new buildings were constructed over 600 acres to communicate the nation’s industrial strength and cultural power, *The Florida Tatler* advocated for Heade’s still lifes to decorate the Exposition’s Florida Building, explaining:

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<sup>239</sup> “Letter from Heade to John Russell Bartlett” (Sept., 27 1864) fn. 33 in Favis, p. 34.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid. Heade, however, also criticized the invasion of Northerners in the South, saying “It seems to me that about every two thirds man I meet is a northerner. They are crowding the crackers out and devouring their substance!” Favis, 34.

<sup>241</sup> Heade visited Stowe upon arriving to Florida in 1883, recounting in a letter, “When I landed at Jacksonville I took a run down to see Mrs. Stowe...I found her (& also her daughter) in a delightful mood, & I could hardly get away.” Given that Heade and Stowe were so friendly, it is possible that Heade might have advised Stowe on her still-life painting practice. After all, the two painted many of the same subjects: oranges and magnolia flowers. Heade was also connected to Harriett Beecher Stowe through her brother, Henry Ward Beecher, who purchased one of his paintings. Stowe, in addition, mentioned Heade in her book *American Woman’s Home and House and Home Papers* by advising readers to decorate their homes with Heade’s paintings. Stebbins 27, 143.

Mr. M. J. Heade...has painted charming pictures of the rivers, lakes, beautiful hammocks of the State... Would not a collection of his pictures be interesting to every visitor to the Florida building? Is it quite fair to the State to allow these to grace other exhibitions? Heade's studies of flowers peculiar to the State would be another attraction that the State cannot forego.<sup>242</sup>

In the Florida Building, Heade's still lifes would have been exhibited within a massive replica of St. Augustine's Spanish fortress, Fort Marion, whose bridge, moat, watchtower, and bastion stood out amidst the Exposition's white neoclassical architecture. Highlighting the state's Spanish history and architecture would have been a deliberate strategy to obscure Florida's affiliation with the American South, a region considered backwards since the Civil War.<sup>243</sup> Heade's still lifes of oranges would have complimented the Spanish history of this building since the orange was famously introduced to Florida by Spanish explorers. In the end, Heade did not display still lifes of any subject in the Florida Building, but it is significant that his still-life paintings were chosen by critics to represent the state on an international scale, demonstrating the national importance that a still-life representation could hold.

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<sup>242</sup> "Artists—Ponce de Leon Studios," *Florida Tatler* (Feb. 11, 1893): 1. The full quote reads: "Is it too late for Florida to have an exhibition of pictures at the coming fair in Chicago? Florida makes no claim to representation in the Art building, while each year numbers of good artists visit the State, carrying away with them beautiful representations of its many natural beauties. Would it not be an advantage to the State to exhibit a collection of these in its own building? Mr. MJ Heade has adopted St. Augustine as his home, has painted charming pictures of the rivers, lakes, beautiful hammocks of the State, has made a study of the atmospheric effects—of the sunrises and afterglows. Would not a collection of his pictures be interesting to every visitor to the FI building? Is it quite fair to the State to allow these to grace other exhibitions? Mr Heade's studies of flowers peculiar to the State would be another attraction that the State cannot afford to forego."

<sup>243</sup> Historian Reiko Hillyer argues that Florida showcased their Spanish history and architecture after the Civil War to create "an iconography that was at once exotic and uncontroversial." "The New South in the Ancient City: Flagler's St. Augustine Hotels and Sectional Reconciliation," *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts, Florida Theme Issue*, 25 (Miami: Wolfsonian Institute, 2005), 107.

### **Florida on Wheels: The Mobility of Fruit and People on the American Railroad**

(FIG. 44) Though absent from the Florida Building, visitors could view Heade's artworks at the fashionable Ponce de Leon Hotel in St. Augustine. The Ponce de Leon was erected in 1888 by Florida railroad and Standard Oil tycoon, Henry Morrison Flagler. If Florida had royalty, Flagler would be king since he was responsible for transforming St. Augustine into a major cultural center. A writer in the *News Herald, St. Augustine* explained:

At his own expense, [Flagler has] paved the adjoining streets, erected a town hall and a hail, and even owns the plaza where the post office stands. So he seems to control the sword of justice, and the fountains of mercy; the public highways and waterways; the earth and sky, and all that in them is in and about St. Augustine...<sup>244</sup>

Flagler, in this sense, was considered a god who created St. Augustine and ruled its empire. He appropriated the most colorful elements of Spanish architecture for the city's town halls, plazas, and hotels that featured square towers, terra cotta balconies, salmon-colored arches, as well as an orange grove and a solarium. In the entrance of the hotel, viewers also saw stained glass windows by Louis Comfort Tiffany and murals by George Maynard depicting allegorical figures of "Adventure," "Civilization," "Conquest," and "Discovery."<sup>245</sup> Murals about exploration were a fitting tribute to the Spanish explorer and hotel's namesake, Juan Ponce de Leon.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> C.W.D. "Art at the Ponce De Leon," *News Herald, St. Augustine* p.91 found at the St. Augustine Historical Society.

<sup>245</sup> Susan Braden, *The Architecture of Leisure: The Florida Resort Hotels of Henry Flagler and Henry Plant* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002): 157.

<sup>246</sup> Ponce de Leon was an important figure in Florida's "discovery." A lecture from the Fruit Grower's Association praises "Florida's first visitors, Ponce de Leon and his friends," who came in search of perpetual youth to "our fabled waters" where "God never misdirects." *Proceedings of the Florida Fruit Growers Association*, 3.

Viewers could examine artworks by Heade in the two-story studios on “artist’s row” in the rear of the Ponce de Leon hotel behind the boiler room.<sup>247</sup> There, Heade worked alongside seven other artists who held weekly evening receptions for hotel guests and local St. Augustinians.<sup>248</sup> The *St. Augustine News* referred to Heade’s workspace as “the dean of studios” and “one of the favorite resorts of the city.”<sup>249</sup> Situated in the backyard of the Ponce de Leon, Heade enjoyed a built-in base of hotel patrons who purchased many of his paintings on display. The relationship between artists and hotel was mutually beneficial since “artists’ row” fostered “artistic and literary talent” that attracted tourists from all over the country to St. Augustine.<sup>250</sup> Critics more generally praised “the good effect which the building of the Ponce de Leon has had on Florida travel this year,” expressing gratitude for “this magnificent structure and its surrounding group of buildings [that] have exalted the interest and admiration of the whole world and have had the effect of bringing a class of visitors to this State who were rarely, if ever, known to come here before.”<sup>251</sup> Heade’s studio on “Artist’s Row” thus belonged to a much larger plan to increase tourism in Florida.

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<sup>247</sup> “Artists-Ponce de Leon Studios,” *Florida Tatler* (Mar. 16, 1901). One article said, “The studios are among the most attractive places to visit in the city. The artists are courteous and obligingly show their pictures, taking infinite pains and pleasure as well in doing it.” “About Artists,” *Florida Tatler* (Apr. 1, 1899): 15. The first floor of the studios was reserved for storage and the second floor was reserved for artists’ space. *The Florida Theme Issue*, 107.

<sup>248</sup> *The Architecture of Leisure*, 176. Five of the seven artists include Frank Shapleigh, Felix de Crano, W. Staples Drown, George W. Seavey, and Robert S. German.

<sup>249</sup> *Florida Tatler* (Jan. 25, 1891) cited by Stebbins, 154; “Ponce de Leon Studios,” *Florida Tatler* (Feb. 5, 1898), 5.

<sup>250</sup> “Ponce De Leon Studios,” *The Daily News Herald* (Feb. 26, 1888): 6.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.* An article reported that “The artists occupying the Ponce de Leon studios donned their evening dress, their smart gowns decked out their studios in their best attire and bid the fashionable world come and see. In answer to this a gay throng of well-dressed, cultivated people, representing the wealth and cultivation of the continent, came, saw, and admired...” “Art Reception,” *St. Augustine News* (Feb. 15, 189-), 12.

It is no surprise that Flagler invited Heade to work at his Ponce de Leon Hotel since the patron greatly admired Heade's paintings of Florida. In addition to commissioning two landscape paintings for display in the Ponce de Leon (*View from Fern Tree Walk, Jamaica* and *the Great Florida Sunset*) Flagler also collected many of Heade's still-life paintings for his personal collection.<sup>252</sup> Flagler would have naturally been interested in Heade's still lifes of oranges and orange blossoms since the railroad magnet invested in Florida agriculture and built orange groves inside and outside of his hotels.<sup>253</sup> A pamphlet describing the orange grove at the Ponce de Leon claimed that "in this beautiful garden one can find realized all his dreams of Southern splendor... You look down over a sea of glossy, brilliant greed, dotted thickly with golden oranges and combining richly with the deep Southern sky."<sup>254</sup> (FIG. 45) Guests were so enamored by the hotel orange groves that they often shipped the fruit to friends up North by placing orders at El Unico—a gift shop in the round tower of the Hotel Cordova—another Flagler building.<sup>255</sup> (FIG. 46) In addition to shipping oranges for tourists, El Unico sold "the prettiest orange knife known as the 'St. Augustine' that possessed handles embossed with representations of fruit."<sup>256</sup> El Unico became an important cultural intersection in St. Augustine where Northerners could ship Florida oranges in real, painted, and engraved form. Heade contributed to this tourist machine by painting Florida fruit and flowers for sale at the Ponce de Leon.

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<sup>252</sup> Stebbins, 123, 150.

<sup>253</sup> Favis, 78; Henry Flagler also built orange groves in San Mateo, Florida according to Sidney Walter Martin, *Henry Flagler: Visionary of the Gilded Age* (Gainesville: Tailored Tours Publications, 103).

<sup>254</sup> Favis, 59.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, 71, 76. El Unico, a branch of the larger manufacturer Greenleaf and Crosby, was well known as "one of the most attractive places to visit in St. Augustine...[with] everything to delight the eye, adorn the person and beautify a home." *Florida Tatler* (Jan. 18, 1896), 2.

<sup>256</sup> "Art Notes," *Florida Tatler* (Apr. 1, 1893), 8.



Flagler would have also been encouraging of Heade's fruit painting since the success of Florida fruit directly reflected the success of Flagler's moneymaker: the railroad. Florida's fruit industry relied heavily on Flagler's East Coast Railroad to distribute goods from St. Augustine to Jacksonville, a Southern hub that connected to other important railroad routes.<sup>257</sup> It was due to investments in railroad technology that Florida quickly transformed into a highly specialized fruit-growing region. (FIG. 47) An 1887 trade card advertising an exhibition of Florida fruits demonstrates the deep connection between fruit and rail. Printed by the Jackson and Sharp Railroad Company based in Wilmington, Delaware, this trade card publicized the exhibit "Florida on Wheels"—"a rolling palace from the Land of Flowers laden with rare exhibits illustrating to tourists, invalids, and prospective settlers the attractions, advantages, and resources of that sunny land." Visitors to this "conservatory on wheels" could view oranges, pineapples, lemons, mangoes, shaddocks, and bananas that were all transported "from the mighty deep." The exhibit's main attraction was likely the orange since this fruit was embossed on the front of the trade card. "Florida on Wheels" was a veritable fruit museum and portable garden that the Sharp Railroad Company used to draw Northern visitors to the South.

It might seem strange that a Delaware railroad company would sponsor an exhibition on Florida fruit since the two states were located so far apart from one another. Jackson and Sharp, however, was wise to fund "Florida on Wheels" since the company had recently opened railway lines transporting passengers from the North to Florida on a

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<sup>257</sup> While the Ponce de Leon Hotel was being erected, Flagler purchased the East Coast Railroad connecting St. Augustine to Jacksonville. He endorsed the construction of a bridge across the St. Johns River to link up the railroad with trains running north. Thomas Graham, *Mr. Flagler's St. Augustine* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014), 23.

trip averaging 24 to 35 hours. An exhibition highlighting Florida attractions was a clever way to entice Northern tourists southward and draw interest in the company's new railroad lines. Oranges, of course, were central to this campaign since they had long been used by Northerners like Stowe to attract "snow birds" from the "frozen North" to the sunny South. The fact that this exhibit displayed Florida oranges "on wheels" emphasized the ease with which people and fruit could be transported up and down the country. The movement of oranges from grove to table, railcar to grocer, and South to North powerfully demonstrated the mobility of fruits and people in the late-nineteenth century. Given the tight politics between Florida oranges, transportation, and tourism in the late-nineteenth century, it is fitting that railroad moguls invested in artists and exhibitions of Florida oranges.

The intersection between fruit and rail is further visible in photographs of Florida by William Henry Jackson, another recipient of Flagler's patronage. Flagler hired Jackson in the 1890s to photograph his landmark hotels in Florida.<sup>258</sup> These photographs, in turn, publicized Flagler's Florida East Coast Railroad which transported visitors from the North to St. Augustine. Jackson would have been comfortable working for Flagler since he had long been an employee of railroad companies that hired him to market the cross-country ride to tourists.<sup>259</sup> For Flagler, Jackson created idyllic photographs flaunting Florida's sunny weather and verdant landscape. (FIG. 48) His photograph *On the Orange Grove in Halifax, Florida* specifically displayed Florida's giant citrus trees that drowned the ground in a carpet of oranges. Jackson also displayed the joys of citrus cultivation by capturing orange pickers happily plucking fruits from branches. Even

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<sup>258</sup> Favis, 57.

<sup>259</sup> Jackson was an experienced railroad photographer. He photographed images for the Union Pacific Railroad, Baltimore Railroad, New York Central Railroad, and several other companies.

though black and white photographs dulled the famously bright color of the fruit (a color that is artificially produced with dye and chlorophyll), Jackson's picturesque views brought to life passages in Southern newspapers that told how it was "a beautiful sight to wander through [Florida's] natural groves laden with such beautiful globes of gold, peeping on all sides from the bright green foliage."<sup>260</sup> Jackson employed all of the traditional citrus rhetoric used to advertise Florida, creating powerful photographs that urged viewers to travel south and plant their own orange grove.

Jackson's prolific experience as a railroad photographer might explain why many of his views of orange groves share a striking resemblance with photographic views of the railway. (FIG. 49) Jackson's photo of an orange grove in Seville, Florida, for instance, mirrors his photograph of a railroad near Beresford, Florida. Both photographs show a sandy trail extending into the horizon, marked by tracks originating from a train or, in the case of an orange grove, a plow. Each pathway is hedged by a line of trees that further liken the two pictures. By applying the same perspective and compositional elements to the two photographs, Jackson equated the journey to Florida on rail with the picturesque journey of walking through a Florida orange grove. Framing the orange grove in the pictorial language of the railroad reinforced how oranges carried the same mission of progress and national expansion. In the same way that trains were thought to civilize the frontier, the cultivation of oranges was believed to civilize Florida and bring "progress" to areas of wilderness. Horticulturists in the nineteenth century repeatedly described the transformative powers of fruit cultivation and agriculture and its ability to

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<sup>260</sup> *Semi Tropical* 2.2 (Feb. 1876), 196.

bring progress to the nation's most unkempt frontiers.<sup>261</sup> This underlying message would have reached northern audiences since his photographs were sold at El Unico, the same store where tourists shipped oranges and souvenir orange knives from St. Augustine to the North. The close alliance between art, oranges, and the railroad all converged at El Unico where orange images travelled all over the country, stirring up fantasies about journeying to Florida.

### **Orange Trees, Black Lives: Imagery of Citrus Labor in Florida**

If persuaded by Jackson's charming photographs of Florida orange groves, viewers could lease their own grove without committing to such a large venture. (FIG. 50) One brochure for "Aurantia Grove" in Northern Florida explained the terms for leasing a grove and contracting the work:

We will care for the Orchard for three years at prices given below...parties owning orchards are at liberty to take charge of their property at any time...Of those who think themselves too poor to invest in an orange grove we would ask, in the face of these facts, are you not too poor to lose such an opportunity for investment? Owning an orange grove is better than life insurance.<sup>262</sup>

Advertisers for Aurantia Grove were bold to compare orange cultivation to life insurance since orange ventures were neither safe nor reliable. Orange groves, in fact, were risky financial investments that relied heavily on climate and other factors outside of human control. Transportation was also a major obstacle for the Florida orange industry since the state still possessed few pathways in the late-nineteenth century to distribute fruit to

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<sup>261</sup> For an overview on fruit and social improvement read Philip Pauly, *Fruits and Plains: The Horticultural Transformation of America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008). For more discussion of agriculture and social improvement, read Frieda Knobloch's second chapter, "Plows," in her book *The Culture of Wilderness: Agriculture as Colonization in the American West* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 49-79.

<sup>262</sup> "Aurantia Grove, Indian River, East Florida" (Springfield: Clark W. Byran and Co., 1872). Found in the Graphic Arts collection of the American Antiquarian Society.

the rest of the country.<sup>263</sup> Some brochures were forthcoming about the gambles of purchasing an orange grove, admitting that “orange groves do not grow by magic, neither are they purchased for a song.”<sup>264</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe also warned readers: “Don’t buy land in Florida that you have not seen with your own eyes and walked over with your own feet.”<sup>265</sup> Despite such caveats, advertisements for orange groves were incredibly seductive, disguising the risks of managing your own grove.

In addition to disguising the financial uncertainties of the orange industry, many depictions also concealed the role of African Americans in Florida orange culture. Tourist literature and magazine illustrations typically displayed White orange pickers when, in reality, many citrus workers were African American. George Barbour’s brochure was unique in acknowledging that on Florida orange groves, “negroes...perform most of the manual labor and are almost the only attainable domestic help...”<sup>266</sup> In contrast to “them yellor fellers,” Barbour wrote, “pure blacks are always the best laborers; they work hardest, most willingly, honestly, and efficiently, always performing the most labor in a day.”<sup>267</sup> Florida manualist Ledyard Bill similarly stated, “there are no people so deserving of considerate and generous treatment from those who were their late masters, as are the negroes of the South.”<sup>268</sup> Bill sympathized with African Americans who did not want “to do any labor for their old masters, since that would seem to them very much like the old system which they now have such a horror

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<sup>263</sup> Floridians, for instance, pleaded with the U.S. government to dredge the bar at the St. Johns River to provide a direct line to steamers from Jacksonville to New York. Shofner, 266.

<sup>264</sup> Davis, 63.

<sup>265</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, “Touching Florida,” *Christian Union* 12.8 (Aug. 25, 1875), 154.

<sup>266</sup> Barbour, 232.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., 234.

<sup>268</sup> Ledyard Bill, *A Winter in Florida or Observations on the Soil, Climate and Products of Our Semi-Tropical State with Sketches of the Principal Towns and Cities of Eastern Florida* (New York: Wood and Holbrook, 1870): 217-219.

of...”<sup>269</sup> Perhaps this is why a number of African Americans were attracted to the orange industry, because it seemed like a departure from planting cotton or tobacco on plantations.<sup>270</sup> Although it is unclear if orange labor provided better conditions for workers, it is certain that African Americans helped build the Florida orange industry.

A number of White Americans encouraged African Americans to participate in the orange industry, believing that orange cultivation could cultivate both African-American minds and wallets. Developer Henry Sanford was one such advocate who hired newly freed African Americans to work his orange grove near St. Augustine. By offering African Americans agricultural work—as well as low-interest mortgages to build schools and churches—Sanford believed that agricultural training could help improve the lives of African Americans in Florida.<sup>271</sup> Edward Daniels believed in a similar philosophy, building African-American schools, churches, and orange groves to hire and help newly freed African Americans in the South. Daniels taught newly freedmen the principles of scientific farming as a way to “do something useful and philanthropic for a race of mankind that for over two centuries had been kept in degrading bondage, according to historian Lawrence Powell.”<sup>272</sup> Building an agricultural community for African Americans on the former plantation of slave-owner George Mason was a powerful statement that communicated Daniels’ desire to reverse the injustices of the

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> David Colburn explains how African Americans were seeking jobs which were distinct from past slave work. “Bluebirds and Redbirds Don’t Feed Together,” *Racial Change and Community Crisis: St. Augustine, Florida, 1877-1980* (1985): 18.

<sup>271</sup> For more on Sanford see: *Florida Theme Issue*, 117; Pauly, 206; Shofner, 261, 276.

<sup>272</sup> Powell, 24.

past.<sup>273</sup> The idea that fruit cultivation could transform African-American lives falls in step with the broader notion that fruit could transform and “civilize” the South.

Contrary to the perspective of Daniels and Sanford, illustrations that recognized Black citrus workers often used humor to show laborers in an unfavorable light. (FIG. 51) Trade cards published by the Alden Fruit Vinegar Company portrayed Black orange pickers as dumb and incompetent, making goofy mistakes that prevented them from successfully collecting oranges. These illustrations specifically showed African Americans trembling on ladders and tripping over horses in clumsy pursuit of orange picking. The pickers’ buggy eyes, bulging lips, gaping mouths, and low brow lines matched the list of facial features designed to portray African Americans as an inferior race. On one trade card, the orange picker even resembles an animal who shares the same color, stance, and expression as his horse. These commonalities perpetuated the widespread notion that African Americans behaved like animals that possessed little control over their minds or bodies.<sup>274</sup> Trade cards depicting Black orange pickers as undisciplined might have also reinforced the belief that African Americans were unskilled fruit laborers “only suited for the raising of cotton.”<sup>275</sup> While these prejudices infiltrated other fields of agricultural labor including cotton and tobacco planting, it is meaningful that they also penetrated images of Black orange workers in Florida. This revelation demonstrates how the orange grove was an important site where people formed ideas about race and labor.

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<sup>273</sup> For more on Daniels, see: Pauly 197 and Powell, 24, 301.

<sup>274</sup> It should also be noted that trade cards occasionally showed lower-class white farmers too in similar circumstances. These images intended to amuse viewers and make them laugh at the incompetency of poor farmers.

<sup>275</sup> George E. Pozzetta, “Foreigners in Florida: A Study of Immigration Promotion, 1865-1910,” *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 53.2 (Oct. 1974): 165-166.

(FIG. 52) Southern itinerant artist William Aiken Walker also depicted a distorted view of African-American orange pickers in his painting, *Orange Grove*.<sup>276</sup> Walker painted this scene in the 1890s when he spent his winters as a guest at the Magnolia Hotel in St. Augustine, Florida.<sup>277</sup> Like his nostalgic paintings of sharecroppers that he sold as souvenirs to “affluent Yankees” on St. George Street, Walker’s *Orange Grove* conformed to stereotypes of the time period that showed African-American farmers with low brow lines, oversized lips, bulging eyes, and other caricatured features.<sup>278</sup> The Black figure biting directly into an orange on the plot of grass to the right of Walker’s composition would have looked especially undignified to nineteenth-century viewers since he consumes an orange without any deference to etiquette or silverware. Authors of etiquette manuals like *The Home Instructor* scolded eaters for biting directly into fruit without silverware, warning, “Never bite fruit...fruit should always be peeled with a knife, and cut or broken.”<sup>279</sup> The author of *Good Manners Make the Man* similarly declared that “an expert fruit eater will so spare an orange as to lose none of the juice...anything must be sacrificed rather than one’s good manners.”<sup>280</sup> Orange spoons with a pointed tip were designed specifically to assist eaters

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<sup>276</sup> I apologize for the blurry image. I am still in the process of locating this painting and finding a better reproduction for publishing in this text.

<sup>277</sup> The *St. Augustine News* reported that “Walker, an artist who delineates Southern life with great truthfulness and power, and who had made St. Augustine his winter home for some years, has taken possession of his old quarters at the Magnolia, while some of his pictures are on exhibition in Tugby’s window.” (Jan. 25, 1891). Found in Sandra Barghini, *A Society of Painters: Flagler’s St. Augustine Art Colony* (Palm Beach: Henry Morrison Flagler Museum, 1998).

<sup>278</sup> “Bought by so many Yankees and snow birds,” William Coleman reports that Walker’s paintings “keep showing up in the strangest places...some have been found in barns...but don’t overlook the rest of the states—there were plenty that found their way out of the South with the return of the “snow birds.” William Coleman, *The Life and Works of William Aiken Walker*, South Carolina Heritage Society, p. 16-18. Found in artist file at William Gerdt’s library.

<sup>279</sup> Thomas W. Handford, *The Home Instructor: A Compendium of Useful Knowledge Necessary for the Practical Uses of Every-day Life* (Chicago: Donohue and Henneberry, 1885), 84.

<sup>280</sup> *Good Manners: Manners Make the Man* (Philadelphia: Porter and Coates 1870), 112.



in consuming this messy fruit.<sup>281</sup> Walker's subject thus lives outside the context of proper etiquette, adding to the collection of derogatory depictions of African Americans at this time.

(FIG. 53) In contrast to most representations of Black orange pickers, an illustration in the *American Odd Fellow Magazine* defies racial stereotypes. For the article "Orange Culture in Florida," the *Odd Fellow* printed an image that portrays Black farmers diligently picking oranges, packing them into buckets, and hauling them to a collection area.<sup>282</sup> The workers look clean and professional and wear confident expressions that resemble mainstream depictions of White orange pickers in Florida. (FIG. 33) Orange workers in this illustration pluck fruit from the orange grove of Colonel Hubbard Hart, the same grove that James Wells Champney illustrated in Edward King's series of articles, *The Great South*. It is meaningful that the *Odd Fellow* shows Black workers picking oranges from one of Hart's historic grove, which he described as one of the best upon the river, growing more than 700 orange trees aging more than forty years old and growing more than thirty feet tall.<sup>283</sup> By showing African-American workers plucking fruit from Florida's most impressive grove, the illustration in *American Odd Fellow* disrupts standard representations of Florida orange culture and honors the contribution of African-American pickers. This image is truly remarkable given the hundreds of pictures reserved solely for White orange workers and the denigration of Black pickers.

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<sup>281</sup> Judith A. Barter, Annelise K. Madsen, Sarah Kelly Oehler, Ellen E. Roberts, *Art and Appetite: American Painting, Culture, and Cuisine* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2013), 167.

<sup>282</sup> "Orange Culture in Florida," *The American Odd Fellow: A Monthly Magazine* (Sept. 1, 1872), 183-186.

<sup>283</sup> King, 401; "Orange Culture in Florida," 184.

The racial conditions for cultivating oranges in Florida throw new light on the orange grove paintings of artist Henry Ossawa Tanner. After years of struggling to sell paintings in the North, Tanner moved to Atlanta, Georgia, in the 1890s where there was a more promising market for the African-American artist.<sup>284</sup> (FIG. 54) While residing in the South, Tanner travelled to Northern Florida where he completed at least two paintings depicting orange groves.<sup>285</sup> One artwork simply titled “Florida” shows an impressionistic landscape inspired by Tanner’s training in Paris just months earlier.<sup>286</sup> Using dense brushstrokes to convey Florida’s bushy orange trees, Tanner deviated from the crisp, highly finished portraits of orange groves visible in mainstream magazines and tourist literature. Tanner’s painting also deviates from tradition by depicting a bare, yellow ground characterized by icy grass and murky water in place of plush soil. Painted in 1894, after Florida experienced low and freezing temperatures that severely damaged the region’s orange groves, Tanner may have captured Florida in the aftermath of the

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<sup>284</sup> Marcia H. Matthews, “Henry Ossawa Tanner, American Artist” (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 33. According to Matthews, Tanner “evidently thought Philadelphia too large and competitive a city for his business enterprise and wished to settle in a smaller community, though one with a large Negro population since white people were not apt to patronize a Negro photographer. He selected Atlanta, Georgia as the site for his photographic venture.” It was a city also noted for its progressiveness, where black men could buy property and own businesses.

<sup>285</sup> Tritobia Hayes Benjamin, “Introduction: Investing in the Vitality of American Art,” *Walter O. Evans Collection of African-American Art* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 199): 14. Evidence suggests that Tanner visited Florida between 1887 and 1888, and later in 1894. In Tallahassee, Florida, he conducted church business at the AME conference in 1894. Tanner painted several marine images of Florida while staying with a family friend, Bishop Daniel. Tanner may have also spent time in Florida and North Carolina because of chronic health problems. Dewey Mosby, Darell Sewell, Rae Alexander Minter, *Henry Ossawa Tanner* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1991), 26; Mallory O’Connor and Gary Monroe, *Florida’s American Heritage River: Images from the St. Johns Region* (Tallahassee: University of Florida Press, 2009): 64-65.

<sup>286</sup> Tanner studied in Paris from 1891-93. Benjamin, 14.

notorious orange freeze.<sup>287</sup> Conditions had not improved months later in 1895 when the front page of the *Jacksonville Florida Times-Union* declared: “Dead, Everything is Dead” in reaction to the “Great Freeze.”<sup>288</sup> (Walt Disney would later purchase hundreds of frozen, unclaimed orange groves for the construction of Disney World in 1962.)<sup>289</sup> In capturing the unflattering aftermath of the orange freeze, Tanner painted an unconventional view of Florida orange culture that ran against traditional portraits of Florida’s fertile groves.

(FIG. 55) Another painting by Tanner of the same title offsets archetypal representations of Florida orange groves. This painting shows a sparse and overcast landscape, awash with dull colors that diverge from sunny images marking the pages of tourist brochures. Tanner also purged his painting of all orange iconography, rendering neither a fruit picker nor a fruit basket, thereby excluding the most common signposts of Florida orange imagery. While the colors and technique of these artworks display Tanner’s French training and experimentation with photographic lighting, one cannot help but wonder if this melancholic scene might at all reflects the artist’s ambivalence towards the South. Marcia Matthews suspects that Tanner experienced the patronizing

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<sup>287</sup> David Wilson and Angus Gillespie, *Rooted in America: Foodlore Popular Fruits Vegetables* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999): 125.

<sup>288</sup> *Jacksonville Florida Times-Union* (Feb. 12, 1895). Cited by Gary R. Mormino in *Dream Fruit for a Dream State* (Spring 2014). Readers can get a sense of what it was like during an orange freeze from Harriett Beecher Stowe’s letters, which state, “I found my orange crop all frozen and lying on the ground stark and stiff I was really sorry since they were frozen that there were so many and such beautiful ones—I never saw the ground carpeted with gold before. Two hundred thousand that were and instead of getting \$2000 for them I am happy to pick up \$.50—but we have had ten years of good harvest and must take our share of trouble.” “Letter to James T. Fields” (Post-Jan. 5, 1881).

<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

condescension that prevailed in the southern states at this time.<sup>290</sup> Tanner's mixed attitudes about the South would not be surprising given that he visited Florida during an unsettling time when the state recently passed Jim Crow laws endorsing racial segregation and the political disenfranchisement of African Americans. By 1890, African Americans lost the right to vote in Florida, further exacerbating their disadvantaged status. The decades following Reconstruction, constitute some of the bloodiest years in African-American history, marked by lynchings from magnolia trees that add a much darker dimension to paintings of Florida's flowers and landscape. Under these circumstances, it is possible that Tanner painted freezing, abandoned orange groves to complicate Florida's reputation as a tropical paradise and poke holes in the Florida citrus dream which was exactly that—a dream.

## **Conclusion**

The gritty politics of race and labor in nineteenth-century Florida warrants deeper investigation. Few scholars have rigorously studied this subject, instead focusing on states located closer to the epicenter of the Civil War and its aftermath. Depictions of Florida orange groves, however, demonstrate how Southern states in the far corners of the nation were in a state of flux as they too had to restructure society and accommodate a new system of labor. Representations of citrus laborers in Florida are a particularly useful subject for studying national politics since the cultivation of oranges—like cotton, sugar, or other politically-charged crops of the time period—directly impacted the

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<sup>290</sup> Marcia M. Matthews, *Henry Ossawa Tanner: American Artist* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994): 34. Cited by Kirsten Buick, "A Way Out of No Way," *Walter O. Evans Collection of African-American Art* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990): 32. Matthews says, "He had been to Florida and experienced the patronizing condescension, more cutting than outright hostility, that prevailed in the Southern States."

conditions of land and labor that struck the very nerve of national debates over slavery and reconstruction. Because the cultivation of fruit pressed upon such contentious issues about who should labor the Southern landscape and to what ends, fruits such as oranges were volatile subjects in the late-nineteenth century. Perhaps this is why many mainstream images of orange culture from this time period pastoralize citrus labor and diminish the role of African-American orange pickers. Investigating pictures that disrupt this visual rhetoric offer a more complete picture of Florida orange culture and the ways in which artists negotiated fantasies of the Florida frontier.

A deeper investigation into Florida orange culture also reveals how idyllic images of orange pickers and groves participated in a larger movement to reconstruct the South and incorporate Florida into the North American empire. Recipes for “Florida Orange Cake” and souvenirs of Florida orange saucers mark a few of the many ways that Americans tried to reincorporate the state after the Civil War and transform Florida from an agricultural wilderness into an agricultural and tourist machine. While many Northerners purchased orange groves in Florida to help improve the state’s economic and racial conditions, they did not pump money into Florida solely out of charity. Northern abolitionists, politicians, and developers understood how cultivating oranges could help shape Southern politics according to Northern desires. To yield oranges, in this sense, was to wield power. The representation of oranges on canvas, silverware, prints, and photographs was integral to this scheme, drawing Northerners to the remote frontiers of Florida in pursuit of the citrus dream. The sheer mobility of the orange image from regions such as Delaware to Florida is perhaps what made the migration campaign so effective. Oranges in Florida thus had important consequences for the broader expansion

and reconstruction of the American empire. Much more than a colorful fruit, oranges were a strategic device for injecting Northern influence into the South.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **Cutting Away the Rind: Uncovering the History of Race and Identity in Nineteenth-**

#### **Century Representations of Watermelon**

Watermelons are a peculiar fruit. Their pink color, watery composition, and hefty weight distinguish them from most other fruits. These physical qualities directly translated into the cultural life of the watermelon, which has played a meaningful role in American art. Although little research has focused on the visual culture of watermelons, the disciplines of Art History and Material Culture offer unique conceptual frameworks to analyze representations of watermelon.<sup>291</sup> By dissecting the compositional elements and artistic techniques employed in depictions of the fruit, scholars can unpack the ways in which visual images of watermelon informed and reflected late nineteenth-century American society. Watermelons are such a productive subject for investigating the social fabric of America because images of the fruit in still-life paintings, trade cards, photographs, and silverware were used to form ideas about war, violence, and sexuality. Watermelons also appeared in dietary manuals, medical journals, and cookbooks that provided alternative uses for the fruit in the arena of health and medicine. Joining images of watermelon in the fine arts with popular vernacular reveals how the fruit bore profound meaning on the discourses of American identity. This chapter seeks to

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<sup>291</sup> I am grateful to the following people who have helped bring attention to the visual culture of watermelon: Ellen Ficklin, *Watermelons*, (Washington, DC: American Folk Life Center and the Library of Congress, 1984); Tanya Sheehan, “Looking Pleasant, Feeling White: the Social Politics of the Photographic Smile,” *Feeling Photography*, ed. Elspeth Brown and Thy Phu (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014): 127-157; Kyla Tompkins, *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2012); Patricia Turner, *Ceramic Uncles and Celluloid Mammies: Black Images and their Influence on Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of Virginia Press, 2002); and Psyche Williams-Forson, *Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs: Black Women, Food, and Power*, (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

understand the cultural codes that watermelons communicate in American visual representation.

Another objective of this chapter is to understand how representations of watermelon formed ideas about race and African-American identity in the nineteenth century. Images that displayed African Americans digging into watermelons and drooling over the fruit perpetuated stereotypes about the group's insatiable appetite for watermelon and inability to control the senses. Other images from the time period show African Americans staggering into watermelon patches, bearing heavy eyes and open mouths as if under a deep spell by the fruit. Representations of African Americans stealing fruits from unguarded watermelon patches also disseminated vicious stereotypes about the group's criminal nature and need for instant gratification. Perhaps the strangest images of watermelon in the Victorian period include trade cards of African Americans morphing into the fruit, growing watermelon heads and bodies. Such images reveal nineteenth-century attitudes towards food and its ability to determine the racial character of an eater. Representations of watermelon across all modes of visual media reflected beliefs about the character of African-American people. This chapter charts the visual history of watermelon in the late-nineteenth century to recognize how the fruit influenced discourses on race and nationhood in America.

### **Breasts, Blood, Guts, and War: Watermelon and the Human Form**

Scholars can begin to understand the cultural meanings underlining watermelon by turning to the history of this fruit in America. Watermelons were favored by some of the most famous figures throughout American history: Thomas Jefferson cultivated the



fruit at Monticello; Henry David Thoreau hosted annual watermelon parties in Concord, Massachusetts; and Mark Twain described watermelon as “chief of this world's luxuries” and “king by the grace of God over all the fruits of the earth.”<sup>292</sup> “When one has tasted it,” Twain wrote, “he knows what the angels eat.”<sup>293</sup> Fit for the appetite of angels, philosophers, and presidents, the fruit was also eaten by the American public on the Fourth of July. Despite its strong association with the anniversary of America’s independence, watermelons are not indigenous to North America. This member of the gourd and cucumber family is native to Central Africa, where watermelons were cultivated as a source of food and water in the arid desert.<sup>294</sup> No part of the watermelon was wasted, but repurposed for roasted seeds, pickled rind, and livestock feed.<sup>295</sup> Americans too valued watermelon for its versatility, making alcohol, sugar, and mulch from the fruit.<sup>296</sup> For its adaptability and nutritional value, many Americans incorporated watermelons into their diet.<sup>297</sup>

Watermelons were not produced on a large scale until the late-nineteenth century when advancements in transportation and refrigeration technology allowed numerous shipments of watermelon to areas across the country. Watermelons grew most

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<sup>292</sup> Ficklin. 17; Mark Twain, *Pudd’n Head Wilson*, (Hartford, American Publishing Co., 1894), 179.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

<sup>294</sup> Patricia Turner, *Rooted in America: Foodlore of Popular Fruits and Vegetables* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 213.

<sup>295</sup> *Cambridge World History of Food*, ed. Kenneth Kiple and Kriemhild Ornelas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 307.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

<sup>297</sup> There is evidence that North Americans were introduced to watermelon by Spanish Moors, Pueblo Indians, European colonists, and African slaves between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. *Cambridge World History of Food*, 306-307; Ficklin, 8; Waverly Root and Richard de Rochemont, *Eating in America* (New York: Ecco Press, 1981), 19,84; Sandra Oliver, *Food in Colonial and Federal America* (San Francisco: Greenwood Press, 2005), 67; Judith Ann Carney and Richard Nicholas Rosomoff, *In the Shadow of Slavery: Africa's Botanical Legacy in the Atlantic World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 106.

abundantly along the “watermelon belt” that stretched from Florida to South Carolina along the banks of the Savannah River.<sup>298</sup> Georgia was the heartbeat of the watermelon trade in the nineteenth century, shipping between 400 to 500 car-loads of watermelons to markets up North.<sup>299</sup> While watermelons were primarily cultivated for consumption, they also played a lively role in seed-spitting contests<sup>300</sup> and “watermelon parties” that revolved around a game requiring players to place their pile of watermelon seeds in numbered holes on cardboard; the player who emptied their pile of seeds first in the numbered holes received a prize.<sup>301</sup> Watermelons also appeared in horticultural contests that offered generous rewards for varieties achieving “closeness to true type, size, smoothness, weight, and solidity.”<sup>302</sup> A farmer named Mr. Frank Rose cultivated one of the largest watermelons in 1871 that weighed an astonishing 57 pounds.<sup>303</sup> (Today, the largest recorded watermelon weighs between 100 to 200 pounds by brothers Ivan and

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<sup>298</sup> “Millions of Mellons,” *Harper’s Weekly* (Sept. 26, 1896). Watermelons, like oranges, are best cultivated in a semi-tropical climate with warm weather to nourish the fruit through the 120-day season. They are planted in the beginning of spring and picked during the summer and fall. Watermelon fields in the late-nineteenth century generally cost \$50 an acre.

<sup>299</sup> Georgia watermelons outnumbered carloads from Florida and South Carolina. Each railroad car could carry up to 20,000 pounds of watermelons, which translated between 800 and 1,200 fruits. Markets in New York received as many as 400 to 500 car-loads of watermelons from Georgia a day. Upon arrival, watermelons were taken to a commission house for inspection by a dealer, who judged the ripeness of the fruit by pressing (or “thumping”) it to one’s ear to listen for a ripe crackling noise. If deemed merchantable, the commissioner would accept the cost of the freight and deliver the watermelons to market for sale. Although many farmers were suspicious of dealers in the watermelon trade, the business remained highly systematized with a bureaucracy of farmers, railroad drivers, dealers, commissioners, and sellers who directed millions of Southern watermelons to tables across America. “The Southern Watermelon Trade,” *Harper’s Weekly* (July 28, 1888).

<sup>300</sup> Today, the longest recorded seed spit was in 1980 by John Wilkinson of Houston, who spit a seed 6 feet, 4 inches. Ficklin, 24.

<sup>301</sup> “Fashion, Fact, and Fancy,” *Godey’s Ladies Book* (Dec. 1896).

<sup>302</sup> “The Southern Watermelon Trade” *Harper’s Weekly*, 1888.

<sup>303</sup> “Large Watermelon” *Our Home Journal* (Sept. 30, 1871), 185.

Lloyd Bright who sell their seeds for \$48 a piece.)<sup>304</sup> Watermelons, as a result, were cultivated for amusement and entertainment as much as nourishment.

The watermelon's enormous size and frosty surface also presented the perfect opportunity for artists to experiment with the elements of form and texture on canvas. (FIG. 56) George Henry Hall, one of the country's most famous still-life painters in the mid-nineteenth century, relished in painting the fruit's messiness.<sup>305</sup> He depicted the fruit torn apart into chunks with seeds spilling onto the surface of a table or stone floor. Hall's contemporary, Andrew John Henry Way, also appreciated the disorderliness of watermelons, explaining in the *Art Amateur*:

Water-melons and cantaloupes, though large, cumbrous and ungraceful, are, under proper conditions, very interesting and pictorial subjects for representation...Get a water-melon... not over ripe, and of a rich carnation interior. Do not cut it, but *break* it, if possible, into three parts. Let this be the centre of your picture—the point of attraction.<sup>306</sup>

This advice contrasted other articles written by Way in the *Art Amateur* to maintain the shape of a fruit for the construction of still-life paintings. While most artists preferred to paint fruits in their whole and dignified form, watermelons were the exception to this rule, breaking with convention through breaking the actual fruit.

Artists were also drawn to painting watermelon because they resembled some of the most intimate parts of the human body. (FIG. 57) This is evident in Hall's painting *Young Woman with Watermelon and Grapes* from 1867, which shows two shapely melons deliberately placed in front of the sitter's chest. By painting two rounded, fleshy watermelons with dark seeds circling the center like nipples, Hall clearly used

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<sup>304</sup> Ficklin, 23.

<sup>305</sup> George Henry Hall (1825-1913) was one of the most famous still-life painters in nineteenth-century America. He worked from a studio in New York City and was the only still-life artist to be recognized in Henry T. Tuckerman's *Book of the Artists* (1867).

<sup>306</sup> Andrew John Henry Way, "Fruit-Painting in Oils," *Art Amateur* 16.6 (May 1887), 129.

watermelon to symbolize the woman's breasts. His inclusion of grapes—another fruit associated with the curves of the female form—further contributed to the sexual charge of this painting. Hall was not unique for using fruit to portray female youth and sexuality. Many American artists including Lemuel Wilmarth painted arousing images of young fruit sellers in peasant shirts and overalls selling fruit from modest baskets. (FIG. 58) Wilmarth's *Girl with Peaches* from 1881 specifically pictures a young fruit seller whose peaches fall out of a basket onto a table. The fallen fruit echoes the girl's fallen overall strap, which nineteenth-century viewers would have read as a metaphor for the girl's fallen virtue and loose sexuality.<sup>307</sup> Such metaphors often accompanied depictions of Italian and Spanish women that artists like Hall and Wilmarth encountered or imagined while painting abroad on the Grand Tour.<sup>308</sup> Locating watermelon in the context of the human body reveals how fruit reproduced ideas about femininity and sexuality in the late-nineteenth century.

In contrast to Hall's paintings of soft, lush watermelons, still lifes of the fruit by artist Albert Francis King appear much more austere.<sup>309</sup> (FIG. 59) King depicted hefty watermelons sitting on wooden crates blemished by marks and nails. Smaller slices of watermelon sit alongside knives which were used to carve square windows into the heart

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<sup>307</sup> There are antecedents for this tradition in early American paintings when artists depicted fruit in portraits of women to express "feminine accomplishment, virtue, and class distinction." Paul Staiti, "Character and Class: The Portraits of John Singleton Copley," in *Reading American Art*, ed. Marianne Doezema and Elizabeth Milroy (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1998), 21-22.

<sup>308</sup> Hall travelled to Spain for eight months between 1867-1868 and Wilmarth travelled to Italy in 1858.

<sup>309</sup> King (1854-1945) was an artist in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania who studied under painter Martin B. Leisser and belonged to the Scalp Level Group. King also served as a charter member of the Artists' Association of Pittsburgh. One review recognized King's talent in still-life painting, saying in 1902 that King "has done many excellent things in still life, in which line he is a master." Notes from curatorial file at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh and Mary Brignano's *The Associated Artists of Pittsburg: 1910-1985* (Pittsburgh: Associated Artists of Pittsburgh, 1985).

of the fruit. The square holes in King's watermelons are so meticulously cut that the only element compromising this precise incision is the pink watermelon guts that dribble over the corner of each square. This square incision, known as a "plug," provided a place for drinkers to inject, or "spike," alcohol directly into the fruit. Spiking the watermelon and sucking the alcohol from a straw was a clever strategy to cut the alcohol's bitter taste with sugared juice.<sup>310</sup> (FIG. 60) This tradition explains King's inclusion of a stoneware pitcher and stemmed wine glass in one of his paintings, which would have been accessories for the consumption of drinks like watermelon wine. Still-life paintings alluding to the alcoholic culture of watermelon would have disgruntled temperance supporters who encouraged eaters to avoid "listening to the advocates of brandy or claret soaked melon, and say to yourself such ideas could only emanate from a diseased brain."<sup>311</sup> Despite mixed attitudes towards alcohol-soaked melons, still lifes by King provide a unique snapshot into the culinary traditions of his time period.

In the decades that King painted watermelon, the melon family was widely known for its medicinal properties to cure indigestion, or dyspepsia, as it was called in the nineteenth century.<sup>312</sup> The anxiety surrounding dyspepsia in America cannot be overstated. Since the eighteenth century, doctors, dieticians, and etiquette experts wrote entire manifestos about the ailments of dyspepsia, ranking it only second to insanity.<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> Once a drinker was done with the spiked fruit, they could then "reinsert the plug or seal it closed with heavy tape." According to Ellen Ficklin, consumers could even spike a watermelon while it was still growing on the vine. Ficklin, 36.

<sup>311</sup> "O, Dat Watermelon," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (Jul. 5, 1891), 10.

<sup>312</sup> The word dyspepsia was derived from the vitamin pepsin, known for improving digestion. This later inspired the name of the soft drink "Pepsi." James C. Whorton more closely analyzes the history of dyspepsia in *Inner Hygiene: Constipation and the Pursuit of Health in Modern Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>313</sup> Trudy Eden, *Cooking in America, 1590-1840* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006), 116. Dietician J.H. Kellogg believed that this affliction was unique to Americans and a "result of the

The consequences of dyspepsia were far-reaching, thought by Emmanuel Kant to stall one's thoughts and result in a form of intellectual constipation.<sup>314</sup> An article in the *Art Amateur* similarly related dyspepsia to the visual arts, stressing the need to properly digest a subject before painting it on canvas. The article explained that "if we bolt our food without thorough mastication, no wonder the digestive organs become deranged and refuse to work properly. So with the painter who will not devote sufficient time to *think* his subject out in its entirety."<sup>315</sup> Due to the physical and mental ailments produced by dyspepsia, many Americans looked to melons for a cure. In 1871, an article entitled "Watermelons as Medicine" described the fruit as a "mild aperient" that if eaten regularly "will keep the bowels free and easy and prevent chills, fever and ague."<sup>316</sup> Other articles from the time period described watermelons as a cooling and refreshing sedative with powerful diuretic properties that make it "one of the pleasantest medicines we could subscribe."<sup>317</sup> Melons, consequently, were thought to cure one of the most widespread diseases plaguing Americans in the late-nineteenth century.

Still-life painters may have alluded to the fruit's digestive qualities in their still-life paintings of watermelon. (FIG. 61) King's still lifes of cantaloupe, for instance, show a string of seeds purged from the mouth of a muskmelon. The seeds extend forward like a human tongue, creating a powerful metaphor for the release and digestion of food.

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universal disregard of dietetic rules for which our countrymen are notorious." *Household Manual of Hygiene, Food and Diet, Common Diseases, Accidents and Emergencies, and Useful Hints and Recipes* by JH Kellogg MD (Battle Creek: Office of the Health Reformer, 1877), 51.

<sup>314</sup> J.D. Mininger and Jason Michael Peck, "Kantstipation," *Consuming Culture in the Long Nineteenth Century: Narratives of Consumption, 1700-1900*, ed. Wagner and Hassan (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), 217.

<sup>315</sup> L. Donaldson and A.J.H. Way, "Fruit Painting in Oil-Backgrounds, Their Color and Arrangement-Closing Hints," *Art Amateur*, 16.1 (Dec. 1886), 10.

<sup>316</sup> "Watermelons as a Medicine," *Mining and Scientific Press* (Aug. 4, 1877), 71.

<sup>317</sup> "Watermelon vs. Diarrhea," *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* (Aug. 19, 1869), 35.

(FIG. 62) The watermelon still lifes of George W. Platt enact the same visual logic by showing a river of seeds flowing from the pit of a muskmelon in *Still Life with Cantaloupe and Grapes*.<sup>318</sup> By deliberately angling the melon towards the viewer, Platt directed attention to the flood of seeds that intimate the very motion of digestion that melons promised to produce. (FIG. 63) The theme of food exiting the body is even more explicit in another still life by Platt that shows a watermelon sitting in a pool of its own juices, trickling over the cliff of a table. An iceberg of watermelon sits in the middle of the glassy lake, further evoking the subject of secretion. The relationship between fruit and digestion would not have been lost on still-life viewers who were well accustomed to considering fruit as a metaphor for the human body. Melons, in particular, were framed in terms of the human body and discussed as having “richly colored flesh,” “spongy tissues,” and a “meaty heart.”<sup>319</sup> Still-life paintings were a fitting medium to explore the human form since representations of bruised and rotting fruits were rendered throughout history to comment on the body’s inevitable decay.<sup>320</sup> The relationship between melons and the human form thickens the meaning of watermelon still lifes.

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<sup>318</sup> Platt was born in Rochester, New York, and exhibited his art all over the country in Indianapolis, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Denver. As an artist for Powell’s survey expedition through the Rocky Mountains, Platt’s adventures may have translated into his still-life paintings that depict fruit like glacial landscapes. His still lifes also evoked the human form, which might have been inspired by artist Thomas Eakins, Platt’s teacher at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts who famously depicted anatomical studies and surgical dissections with uncompromising realism. Notes from William Gerdts Library, Aug. 2014; Maria Chamberlin-Hellman’s dissertation, *Thomas Eakins as a Teacher* (New York: Columbia University, 1981): 534.

<sup>319</sup> These descriptions can be found in *Burpee’s Seeds that Grow for 1899* (Winterthur Collection of Ephemera, SB115 A88a TC) and “O, Dat Watermelon,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 7.5 (1891): 10, which describes “the heart of a ripe watermelon.”

<sup>320</sup> Dutch still-life artists were particularly well-known for analogizing fruit to the human body. Dutch artists rendered bruised and unripe fruit to comment on life’s transience. This theme spread to Spanish and French still-life painting as well, known more broadly as *memento mori* pieces that served as reflections on mortality.

Due to the watermelon's physicality and likeness to human anatomy, it is possible that artists used the fruit to portray darker themes relating to physical violence. This is visible in the hundreds of still-life paintings that show watermelons cut, stabbed, scored, battered, and bleeding with juice. (FIG. 64) One still life by Robert Spear Dunning from 1899 is particularly violent, displaying the heart of a watermelon pierced by the sharp edge of a knife. A lump of watermelon has fallen from the fruit, exposing its bloody insides on the surface of a table. The left side of the watermelon shows a rectangular scar that emphasizes the fruit's injured condition. The title of this painting, *The First Cut*, connotes sexual violence in this image of a knife penetrating the pink, fleshy folds of a watermelon. While the violence in watermelon still lifes has antecedents in earlier Renaissance paintings that pictured severed fruit to symbolize the subjects of rape and murder, Dunning's painting also resonates with contemporary stories about watermelon slayings in American periodicals. One article from *Frank's Leslies* magazine in 1874 told of a man who made an incision so long and deep in a watermelon that he swore he heard the fruit scream "Murder!"<sup>321</sup> Other stories from the late-nineteenth century warned readers about the dangers of thrusting and splitting watermelons with sharp knives. Given the unsettling nature of knives piercing watermelons, it is likely that still-life artists painted this subject to explore the theme of physical violence.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>321</sup> "Watermelon Extraordinary," *Gleason's Pictorial Home Visitor* (Oct. 1, 1874), 245.

<sup>322</sup> Decades later, Frida Kahlo painted a still life of watermelons that show the fruit chopped and sliced in different forms. Inscribed in a watermelon slice in the forefront of her picture are the words, "viva la vida," which translates to "long live life." She also wrote her name, the date, and the place where she committed suicide on the melon's red flesh. It seems appropriate that Kahlo addressed her imminent death on the face of a watermelon, a fruit that has long represented both the vivacity of life and pain of death.



Edward Edmondson, Jr. painted one of the most violent still lifes of watermelon in the nineteenth century.<sup>323</sup> The artist was known for his award-winning paintings of kiwis, pawpaws, and other exotic fruits that displayed the culinary diversity of his home-state of Ohio. Edmondson would have been exposed to a wealth of fruit due to the state's earlier opening of the Ohio Canal, which improved the trade of foods and goods between the North and South with innovations in steamship technology. (FIG. 65) Edmondson flaunted the region's rich pomological resources in his painting, *Still Life with Melons, Pear and Peach*.<sup>324</sup> While the smaller fruits in this painting have been delicately severed in half, the watermelon in the center of the composition has been completely chopped to its core. The watermelon appears bitten and chewed, with pink meat gnawed to the bone. Unlike most watermelons that sit horizontally on tabletops in still-life paintings, this watermelon stands vertically and upright on a green platform. Edmondson enhanced the strangeness of this work by affixing pieces of glass to the canvas, making the watermelon's jagged edges look like teeth marks engrained in the pink flesh. Although some manuals encouraged artists to experiment with glass in their paintings,<sup>325</sup> the strange texture and posture of Edmondson's watermelon would have certainly stood out to viewers.

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<sup>323</sup> Edmondson (1830-1884) was a well-known portrait and still-life painter in Dayton, Ohio. He won awards for his fruit paintings at the Ohio State Board of Agriculture and Mechanical Fairs. He maintained a studio with photographer Thomas Walker Cridland, later settling in California. For more information on Edmondson, consult Bruce Evans' *The Paintings of Edward Edmondson* (Dayton: Dayton Art Institute, 1972) and Betty Dietz Krebs; "Faces from Cities Past: Nineteenth-Century Daytonian," *Dayton Daily News* (Jan. 14, 1972): 7-8, from the curatorial file on Edmondson, Jr. at the Dayton Art Institute.

<sup>324</sup> This painting was not inexpensive; it originally cost \$240 according to the *Dayton Daily Journal* (Oct. 10, 1867), 2.

<sup>325</sup> Sir Charles Eastlake, *Methods and Materials of Painting of the Great Schools and Masters* (New York: Longman, Brown, and Green, 1847): 364-365, cited by Bruce Evans in *The Paintings of Edward Edmondson* footnote 17 p. 14.

Edmondson might have depicted a gnawed and deteriorating watermelon to comment on the deterioration of the American union, which was worsening in 1862 during the second year of the Civil War when Edmondson painted this image. The pears, peach pods, and melons divided in half might have also spoken to a divided nation. Edmondson would not have been the only artist to use fruit to portray a nation at war. (FIG. 66) Edward Chalmers Leavitt painted a still life in the same year that displayed a bruised apple with two beads of juice dripping down its cheek. The droplets of juice called to mind the tears and bloodshed of soldiers on American battlefields. Leavitt's still life may have specifically referenced the violence he witnessed while fighting for the North on the Navy's U.S.S. *Galena* that challenged Confederate gunboats on the Virginia Peninsula. Perhaps this is why Leavitt painted his apple on a fractured countertop whose cracks loosely delineate the shape of rivers and state territories in the manner of a naval map. Leavitt's selection of an apple for this still life presented a particularly powerful metaphor for the country since apples were considered a national fruit in the nineteenth century, reserved for the most patriotic dishes such as apple pie and George Washington cake. Edmondson may have taken a cue from contemporaneous painters like Leavitt who employed fruit to convey an embattled nation.<sup>326</sup>

(FIG. 67) George Henry Hall's painting *A Plea for Peace* further confirms how artists used still-life paintings of fruits and flowers to comment on the fractured nation. Hall referenced the unsettled state of the country in his depiction of delphinium, hydrangea, and salvia flowers colored in red, white, and blue like the American flag. While these flowers would normally blossom from a plant or vase, they bloom from a

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<sup>326</sup> It is likely that Edmondson was a supporter of the North as a resident of the free state of Ohio. He painted a portrait of General (later President) James Garfield, which might further point to his northern allegiances.

rifle in Hall's painting, creating the sensation of exploding flowers in place of exploding gun powder. In recasting the rifle as a vase from which flowers grow, Hall visualized the words of many national leaders who called upon Americans to replace weapons of war with weapons of agriculture. Hall's still life specifically foreshadowed the words of agricultural leader Marshall P. Wilder in 1862 who expressed hope for the day "when our fields shall no longer be ploughed with the deadly cannon, or fertilized with the blood of our bretheren,—and when peace shall again wreath her olive leaves around these distracted States."<sup>327</sup> Paintings of fruits and flowers, therefore, are not as simple or straight forward as they seem. Still-life paintings provided artists a powerful platform to comment on the conditions of war and violence in America.

### **"Oh! Dat Watermelon": Race and Black Identity in Images of Watermelon**

While still lifes of watermelon were useful for discussing the subjects of war and violence, they were also useful for discussing debates about race and African-American identity in the last decades of the century. The watermelon's association with Black identity likely grew out of the fact that many African Americans cultivated watermelons in slave gardens and small watermelon patches in the early nineteenth century. After the Civil War, representations of African Americans with watermelon took on more sinister meaning in caricatures, trade cards, song sheets, and minstrel poems that reproduced a nasty stereotype claiming Black people possessed an unadulterated lust for the fruit.<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>327</sup> Marshall P. Wilder, *Address delivered at the Ninth Session of the American Pomological Society held in Boston, M.A.* (Boston: McIntire and Moulton Printers, 1862), 6.

<sup>328</sup> Contrary to most scholars who discuss the evolution of the watermelon stereotype in the twentieth century, it actually has much earlier antecedents in the nineteenth century. Most allusions to the watermelon stereotype date to the 1870, 80s and 90s. William Black located one

This idea was supported by an article in *Harper's Weekly* that reported how “colored people begged for the watermelon bits broken in transit, eagerly eying the beautiful melons, hoping against hope that one stray melon might fall his way.”<sup>329</sup> A story in *The Christian Recorder* also perpetuated the stereotype by describing a Black man so obsessed with watermelon that he ate a 46-pound melon in one sitting, requiring an emetic to save his life.<sup>330</sup> The fruit’s role in watermelon parties, seed-spitting contests, and alcoholic drinks made the fruit especially useful for portraying Black indulgence and intemperance.<sup>331</sup> The stereotype was further cemented by the nineteenth-century name of a dark green watermelon variety known as the “Niggerhead.”<sup>332</sup> These are a few examples that depicted African Americans as an intemperate people who could not control their appetite for watermelon.

The racial subtext of watermelons is thrown into sharp relief upon analyzing the print culture of watermelons from the late-nineteenth century. Some of the most prolific lithography firms distributed prints broadcasting the watermelon stereotype. (FIG. 68) One lithograph from the U.S. Printing Company displays a group of Black men and women feverishly dancing around piles of watermelon that form a pyramid in the center of the composition. By showing people erupting with smiles and kicking their feet into the air, this illustration gave steam to the stereotype that African Americans were fanatic about watermelon. (FIG. 69) Trade cards also portrayed the Black mania for watermelon,

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of the earliest racist watermelon depictions from 1869 in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Magazine*. William Black, “How Watermelons Became a Racist Trope,” *The Atlantic* (Dec. 8, 2014).

<sup>329</sup> “Millions of Melons,” 1896.

<sup>330</sup> “A Colored Man at Des Moines...” *The Christian Recorder* (Sept. 30, 1886).

<sup>331</sup> Patricia Turner argues that watermelon stereotypes also stemmed from the idea that Blacks “naturally prefer foods that they can eat with their hands” and that their “nutritional needs can be supplied by easily accessible crops that grow profusely.” *Ceramic Uncles and Celluloid Mammies*, 15.

<sup>332</sup> “The Southern Watermelon Trade” *Harper's Weekly*, 1888.

showing African-American people with beady eyes and devilish smiles as they approach the fruit in watermelon patches.<sup>333</sup> These figures look possessed by watermelon, resembling zombies haunted by their infatuation with the fruit. (FIG. 70) A similar theme was conveyed in an advertisement for Lodi watermelon in California that shows a Black man transporting an oversized melon on a mule-driven wagon.<sup>334</sup> The driver operates the vehicle with eyes half open, oblivious to the men who steal a slice from his cargo. The watermelon in this print forms the profile of an open mouth, reinforcing the themes of appetite and indulgence that were so heavily attached to watermelon imagery in this time period. Lithographs in this vein reveal the pervasiveness of the watermelon stereotype that extended all the way to California in the late-nineteenth century.

(FIG. 71) An illustration of “Darkies’ Day at the Fair” in *Puck Magazine* further fueled the watermelon stereotype.<sup>335</sup> “Darkies’ Day,” or “Negro Day,” marked one of the only occasions that African Americans were allowed to visit the fair grounds of the Columbian Exposition in 1893. Watermelons were distributed for free at this event, despite complaints by African-American members on the Exposition Planning Committee who wanted “Negro Day” to be “a no watermelon day.”<sup>336</sup> These concerned members must have anticipated illustrations like those in *Puck Magazine* that depicted a derogatory view of African Americans with wide eyes and moist lips eagerly waiting in line to purchase “ice-cold watermillions.” Those who have already purchased the fruit sit

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<sup>333</sup> Trade cards were mass-produced advertisements that became popular in America after the Civil War. They were small rectangular cards handed out in stores and within product packaging that reached broad audiences. They were also distributed in the home and collected in albums.

<sup>334</sup> I am grateful to collector Jay T. Last and David Mihaly, curator of Graphic Arts at the Huntington Library, for bringing this image to my attention.

<sup>335</sup> Frederick Burr Opper, “Darkies’ Day at the Fair” *Puck* (Aug. 21, 1893), 186-187.

<sup>336</sup> Anna Paddon and Sally Turner, “African Americans and the World’s Columbian Exposition,” *Illinois Historical Journal* 88.1 (Spring 1995), 32.

barefoot and cross-legged on the ground, eating the fruit without a napkin or piece of silverware. These eaters would have looked barbaric to *Puck* readers who were familiar with the “proper” social codes dictating the consumption of fruit. In reaction to the cruelty of watermelon stereotypes, a number of African Americans throughout history refused to eat or pose with watermelon in public. Actress Butterfly McQueen most famously declined to eat watermelon on camera in the film *Gone with the Wind*.<sup>337</sup> Figures like McQueen and members on the Exposition Planning Committee understood the role of watermelon in popular vernacular and its ability to advance the trajectory of racism.<sup>338</sup>

The racist associations tethered to watermelon were so widespread in the late-nineteenth century that several pieces of silverware also broadcasted the stereotype. (FIG. 72) Two souvenir spoons from Florida show handles sculpted in the figure of Black men who lift slices of watermelon to their lips.<sup>339</sup> The men’s flared nostrils and swollen

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<sup>337</sup> Turner, *Rooted in America*, 216. This gesture by McQueen, however, was diminished by her portrayal in “Gone with the Wind” which strongly conformed to racial stereotype.

<sup>338</sup> The Columbian Exposition, in general, was a battleground for food and race. Anna Paddon and Sally Turner reveal how African Americans were relegated to the Hall of Agriculture, selling souvenir cotton bales and creole foods. Here, Nancy Green played the role of Aunt Jemima, making pancakes from a processed mix on a griddle for large crowds at the Fair. Several scholars including Sherrie Innes discuss the stereotypes perpetuated by the Aunt Jemima character. The performance of Aunt Jemima specifically reinforced myths about the happy slave since Aunt Jemima represented a freed slave who joyfully reminisced about life on the Louisiana plantation. The following scholars analyze the culture of race and food at the World’s Fair: Warren Belasco, *Meals to Come: A History of the Future of Food* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Priscilla Brewer, *From Fireplace to Cookstove: Technology and the Domestic Ideal* (Syracuse: Syracuse University, 2000); *Consuming Culture in the Long Nineteenth Century: Narratives of Consumption, 1700-1900*, Ed. Tamara Wagner and Nadin Hassan (London: Lexington Books, 2010); Kristin Hoganson, *Consumers’ Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Sherrie Inness, *Kitchen Culture in America: Popular Representations of Food, Gender, and Race* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

<sup>339</sup> The majority of souvenir spoons were made in America by New England manufacturers that die-stamped and crafted spoon imagery into steel in the same way that coins were minted. They

mouths convey a crude expression that conformed to phrenological standards of the time period. Their desire for watermelon is punctuated by the bright red color of the fruit, which was often the only feature tinted with color on souvenir spoons. *Godey's Lady's Magazine* advertised similar spoons that were "enamelled with a slice of watermelon in the luscious red of the ripe fruit...The handle is tipped with a negro's head in relief, in dead black enamel, while below appears a tuft of the green leaves of the watermelon."<sup>340</sup>

It was typical for spoons to show adornment because unlike forks or knives, spoons possessed a wide surface area for decoration. Engraving the watermelon stereotype into a spoon was a powerful method of disseminating this prejudice and reinforcing rules on how and how not to behave in the dining room where these spoons were displayed. This lesson was especially salient on silverware, the very object excluded from illustrations of Black watermelon eaters so as to emphasize their crudeness. On the surface of spoons, trade cards, and magazine illustrations, the watermelon stereotype served the same purpose to differentiate colored eaters from "civilized" eaters.<sup>341</sup>

The delirious smiles drawn on African Americans marked another way in which image makers denigrated Black eaters in the late-nineteenth century. (FIG. 73) One

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grew popular during the Columbian Exposition. Larry Roberts, *Florida's Golden Age of Souvenirs, 1890-1930* (Gainesville: University of Press Florida, 2001), 73-75.

<sup>340</sup> "Fashion, Fact, and Fancy," *Godey's Lady's Book* (Feb. 1896). Souvenir spoons also displayed racist imagery pairing African Americans with alligators. For a more thorough investigation of this topic, consult Patricia Turner's chapter on "Alligator Bait" in *Ceramic Uncles and Celluloid Mammies*.

<sup>341</sup> Earlier in the century, Americans in general were criticized for consuming watermelon in a vulgar manner. English writer Fanny Trollope wrote the most scathing review of American watermelon habits in her infamous book, *The Domestic Manner of Americans* from 1832, writing: "Their manner of devouring them is extremely unpleasant; the huge fruit is cut into half a dozen sections, of about a foot long, and then, dripping as it is with water, applied to the mouth, from either side of which pour copious streams of the fluid, while, ever and anon, a mouthful of the hard black seeds are shot out in all directions, to the great annoyance of all within reach." Such descriptions were damaging at a time when many believed that the manner in which a person ate determined the character and virtue of that person.

photograph of a Black boy from 1891 displays what Tanya Sheehan refers to as the “watermelon smile,” which stretches from cheek to cheek as the boy bites into a juicy watermelon crescent.<sup>342</sup> His goofy grin reflects the title of this photograph, *Oh Golly, but I’s Happy!* The boy’s purposeful gaze off camera and exaggerated pause before biting into the fruit suggests that this photograph was carefully staged. By instructing the sitter to pause in mid-smile, the photographer was clearly trying to create a visual resemblance between the shape of the boy’s smile and the shape of the watermelon. Artists often forged a likeness between the broad, pink crescent shape of a watermelon and the similarly-shaped smiles worn by Black sitters to support the view that African Americans were a simple-minded people who possessed an infantile excitement for watermelon.<sup>343</sup> (FIG. 74) This point was reiterated in photographs and trade cards that showed White watermelon eaters displaying goofy grimaces and buggy eyes in imitation of African Americans.<sup>344</sup> These grimaces looked especially uncouth in a time period when even revealing one’s teeth in photographs was considered brash.<sup>345</sup> Watermelon smiles were considered a part of Black physiognomy in the late-nineteenth century that both Black and White sitters put on to perform racial difference.

(FIG. 75) Few scholars have realized how the racial legacy of watermelon infiltrated still-life paintings as well, including an 1896 still-life print based on an original

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<sup>342</sup> Tanya Sheehan, “Looking Pleasant, Feeling White: The Social Politics of the Photographic Smile,” *Feeling Photography*, ed. Elspeth Brown and Thy Phu (Durham: Duke University Press, Spring 2014): 127-157.

<sup>343</sup> Kyla Tompkins talks more explicitly about the fetishization of the Black mouth in her book, *Racial Indigestion*.

<sup>344</sup> Sheehan, 137.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid, 144.



painting by John Edmund Califano.<sup>346</sup> In this painting of a watermelon severed in half by a knife, Califano depicted every ridge and plateau of the watermelon as if it shared the topographical surface of a mountain range. To emphasize the watermelon's mountainous height, Califano depicted red and green tomatoes on the left side of the composition that look diminutive in comparison to the pink fruit. Engraved below the fruit is the picture's title, *Oh, Dat Watermelon!* which differed from Califano's original title, simply *Watermelon*. (FIG. 76) The new title assigned to the artist's painting harkened minstrel songs similarly titled "Oh! Dat Watermelon" and "Give Me Dat Sweet Watermelon."<sup>347</sup> Califano's print also mirrored a poem published by *Harper's Weekly* from the same year that read:

Oh, see dat watermillion a-smilin' thew de fence!  
How I wish dat watermillion it was mine!  
De white folks must be foolish to lef' it dar alone,  
A-smilin' at me from de vine.<sup>348</sup>

By appropriating the story of a Black man tempted by "dat watermillion" for a still-life painting, Califano's print perpetuated the malicious stereotype that African Americans were fixated with watermelon. Although there is no iconography in this still life to denote an African-American eater, the title squarely locates this painting in the racial context of Black temptation. This depiction of indulgence, however, is mitigated by the

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<sup>346</sup> Califano (1862-1946) was a landscape painter who lived in Chicago, San Francisco, and California. He studied under Domenico Morelli and exhibited in Naples, Italy in 1880, the Art Institute of Chicago in 1907, and the National Academy of Design in New York City in 1897-99. More information on this artist can be found in Edan Hughes' *Artists in California, 1786-1940* (Sacramento: Crocker Art Museum, 2002).

<sup>347</sup> The song *Oh! Dat Watermelon* was written by Luke Schoolcraft and arranged by John Braham, and printed in several minstrel songbooks and magazines including the *Singer's Journal* (Oct. 31, 1869), 730. It was also sold for one cent in the *Saturday Evening Post* (March 5, 1881), 15. There was an article in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* about watermelon with the same title (Jul. 5, 1891), 10. The song *Give Me Dat Sweet Watermelon* was written by Fred Lyons and published by Richard Saalfeld in 1883.

<sup>348</sup> "Millions of Melons," 1896.

polished table and ivory-handled knife that signaled a more genteel way of eating watermelon. Califano's print, in this case, mocks the Black appetite for "dat watermelon" while keeping White dining-room customs in place.

(FIG. 77) Currier and Ives borrowed the same title for a print featuring two Black boys eating watermelon in an unguarded patch. The boys are rendered in pickaninny character with buggy eyes, uncombed hair, and swollen lips that dribble with watermelon juice. So enveloped in the fruit, the boys fail to see the watermelon-patch owner who threatens to approach the boys with a knife in hand. This scene brought to life hundreds of stories about watermelon theft in the late-nineteenth century that invoked a mixture of humor and violence. No thief was spared punishment in these stories, including a new bride who was reportedly murdered by her father-in-law for illicitly entering his watermelon patch.<sup>349</sup> One article concluded that watermelon theft was most common in areas "where there was an excess of colored citizens... The only method to insure a full crop of melons was to station a man by each melon from the time it was the size of a hen's egg until it ripened."<sup>350</sup> (FIG. 78) Several images specifically displayed White men guarding watermelon patches from Black intruders, including a photograph of a White man pointing a gun at a scarecrow that he has mistaken for a "leetle darkey in a melon patch." This subject was reproduced over and over again into the early twentieth century, using the site of the watermelon patch to question the access of African Americans.

These images warrant deeper contextualization because it is no coincidence that depictions of the watermelon patch proliferated during the rise of Jim Crow segregation

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<sup>349</sup> "Watermelon Killing," *The Illustrated Police News* (Aug. 22, 1872), 10.

<sup>350</sup> "Difficulties of Watermelon" *New England Homestead* (Sept. 19, 1874), 298. Watermelon theft was considered larceny and subject to fines and imprisonment depending on the case.

in the late-nineteenth century when the status of African Americans in society was fiercely debated. While earlier in the 1870s African-American access to public resources expanded with Reconstruction legislation such as the Homestead Act that allowed newly freedmen to purchase land,<sup>351</sup> the 1880s and 90s saw a rejection of this legislation by a rising Democratic power in the South that limited Black access in the form of Jim Crow laws. Jim Crow laws, or the “black codes” dismantled many of the civil rights that African Americans gained during Reconstruction, putting in place legislation that fueled the economic exploitation, electoral disfranchisement, and legal segregation of African Americans.<sup>352</sup> This resulted in one of the most brutal periods of discrimination and violence against African Americans. In this cultural moment when the country oscillated between laws then enabled and then disabled Black people to exercise equal rights in the public sphere, the watermelon patch became an important site where debates about racial access and violence were acted out. The broken fence in these images provided a particularly powerful metaphor for the collapse of racial boundaries that many feared would result in a blending of land and people. These findings encourage scholars to look beyond more obvious landscapes like the cotton plantation to the watermelon patch where debates about race also erupted.

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<sup>351</sup> Congress also enacted the Fourteenth Amendment (endowing African Americans with birthright citizenship and equal protection of the law) in 1868 and the Fifteenth Amendment (guaranteeing men the right to vote regardless of race) in 1870.

<sup>352</sup> Raymond Gavins, “Literature on Jim Crow,” *OAH Magazine of History* 18.2 (Jan. 2004), 13. These laws were also known as “black codes.” Despite the promise of the Emancipation Proclamation, the Thirteenth Amendment, and the Confederate defeat in the Civil War, these laws were ignored by Southern communities. For more information on the black codes, read: Douglas Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II* (New York: Anchor, 2009).

## **Building and Dismantling the Watermelon Narrative in Genre and Still-Life**

### **Painting**

Genre paintings of everyday life offer another look at how watermelons functioned within the discourses of art and race. (FIG. 79) Thomas Hovenden's painting *I Know'd It Was Ripe* is a constructive example, showing a young, Black man holding a watermelon in a grimy interior that locates his station in the lower class. Hovenden emphasized the sense of dirt in this setting by layering gray paint in thick impasto onto the canvas. The only object brightening the room is the colorful watermelon the boy touches on the wooden table. Hovenden's subject seems to have already taken a bite of the fruit since his lips are greased with juice. The diagonal line of light extending from the boy's lubricated lips to the pink fleshiness of the watermelon conveys the boy's lustful desire for the fruit—and the female body part it resembles.<sup>353</sup> Hovenden's painting, as a result, propagated stereotypes of African Americans as an excessively sexual people. The post-coital tone of this painting translated into a review of Hovenden's work that noted how the artist "loves to paint boys cutting open watermelons or smoking cigarettes and beaming all over with the satisfaction that comes from the gratification of animal desires."<sup>354</sup> (FIG. 80) Although Hovenden's painting synchronizes with stereotypes of the time period, his original sketch for *I Know'd It Was Ripe* shows the beginnings of a more dignified and individualized portrayal of his African-American sitter. Perhaps Hovenden added weight to the boy's eyelids and a

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<sup>353</sup> The likeness between watermelon and vaginal flesh is visible in an earlier still life by Raphaelle Peale, which Alexander Nemerov reads as the artist's commentary on the "melons' womb-like interior." Nemerov, 153.

<sup>354</sup> Sylvester Rosa Koehler, *American Etchings* (1886) referenced by Teresa Carbone in *American Paintings in the Brooklyn Museum v.2* (New York: Giles, 2006), 656.

slipperiness to his smile to attract a broader viewership that expected to see stereotypical depictions of African Americans in art.<sup>355</sup>

The title of Hovenden's painting warrants deeper investigation because like the print *Oh! Dat Watermelon*, the painting *I Know'd It Was Ripe* relies on the voice and linguistic patterns of a lower-class African American to speak for the painting.<sup>356</sup> By borrowing the vocabulary of his sitter's race and class, Hovenden makes the subject in *I Know'd It Was Ripe* the mouthpiece of his painting. Artists like Hovenden did not honor African-American sitters by devoting their titles to the imagined voices of their subjects. Such titles belonged to a culture of racial parody that depicted African Americans as slow and unintelligent, constantly abbreviating, misspelling, and mispronouncing English words because they were supposedly incapable of mastering the English language. A character in a sketch from *Godey's Lady's Book* specifically complained about Black pronunciations of the word watermelon, saying, "Are they not always watermill *yans*, mill *yins* , or millyuns?"<sup>357</sup> Titles such as "Oh Dat Watermelon" and "I Know'd It Was Ripe" validated these complaints and fed the fiction that African Americans lacked the intelligence to adopt White-American customs.<sup>358</sup> Such images also conflated ideas about race and class that continuously pigeonholed African-American people to a culture

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<sup>355</sup> This strategy seemed to work since Hovenden's paintings attracted praise from a variety of critics who considered the artwork "popularly realistic" and one "among the most important [works]" in an exhibition at the New York Artist's Fund Society. The painting was exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1885 and the New York Artist's Fund Society in February 1886. It was eventually purchased by collector Benjamin Altman and was referenced in "My Note Book" *Art Amateur* (Mar. 1886), 76; *Magazine of Art* (1886), 17; and in the *New York Tribune*, *New York Herald*, *The Sun* from 1886.

<sup>356</sup> Hovenden also used dialect in paintings entitled "I'se So Happy" and "Dat Possum Smell Pow'ful Good" from 1881.

<sup>357</sup> "A Sketch," *Godey's Lady's Book* (Aug. 1877).

<sup>358</sup> Terhune agrees that the use of "negro dialect" in this title sets apart the African-American subject as the "other" or "quaint" and not sophisticated like the artist, spectator, or buyer. *Thomas Hovenden: His Life and Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 103.

of the lower classes. Titles incorporating lower-class dialect demonstrate how images of African Americans across prints and paintings were designed to diminish the dignity of their subjects.

(FIG. 81) In the same year that Hovenden painted *I Know'd It Was Ripe*, Southern artist William Aiken Walker painted *Little Negro Girl Eating Watermelon*. Set outdoors in a grassy field, Walker painted a young child smiling innocently as she digs her hand into a pink, juicy watermelon. Her rose-colored shirt blends in with the pink watermelon she cradles, forging a likeness between the warm color of the fruit and the warm nature of the girl. Despite her sweet countenance, Walker's subject defies all Victorian social codes by clawing her hands through the pink meat of the watermelon. Viewers can clearly see the streaks of watermelon paved by her fingers. (FIG. 82) The manner in which the girl fiddles the watermelon is reminiscent of the way illustrators depicted African Americans fiddling banjos: another racially-loaded subject of the time period. Images of Black banjo players were as widespread as Black people feasting on watermelons in the late-nineteenth century, showing men with toothy smiles, hunched over stools, strumming the instrument.<sup>359</sup> Walker's subject assumes a similar undignified position by sitting low to the ground and smiling widely as she fiddles the watermelon. The comparison between a watermelon and a banjo is not farfetched given that both objects originated in Africa and were brought over to North America on slave ships. The fact that some banjos were originally made from gourds further likened the instrument to

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<sup>359</sup> It was at this time that Black minstrel productions shifted to performances that focused heavily on African Americans on the plantation, recalling the "happy days" on the plantation filled with bright cotton fields and lively banjo music. This coincided with a "reawakening of the Northern public's curiosity about slave life and the plantation," according to Robert C. Toll in *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974): 234-235, 237, 245.

watermelon.<sup>360</sup> The similarities between *Little Negro Girl* and minstrel imagery of the time period enhance the racial charge of this painting and illustrate the connectedness between the culture of watermelon across high and low art.<sup>361</sup>

(FIG. 83) Winslow Homer's painting *Watermelon Boys* may have reversed the cultural work of mainstream watermelon depictions. This painting, which belonged to a series of "negro studies" and studies of the White poor in the Reconstruction South, would have immediately stood out to viewers for its union of Black and White figures in one watermelon patch. While two boys in this scene lie on their stomachs eating watermelon slices, one Black boy in the center of the composition sits upright, casting a watchful gaze over the fence they have trespassed. The boy's concern is warranted considering that he would likely suffer a more severe punishment for watermelon theft than his White counterpart. The intelligent glare of this boy deviates from most watermelon imagery that depicted African Americans as glassy-eyed buffoons, intoxicated by watermelon juice. The boy's upright posture also diverges from stereotypical imagery that relegated Black figures to the lower register of the picture plane. Homer destabilizes this hierarchical arrangement by endowing the Black boy in his painting with the most height and, therefore, the most dignity. These aesthetic decisions were surely deliberate since Homer who would have been very familiar with conventional watermelon imagery as an illustrator for *Harper's Weekly*. Homer's

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<sup>360</sup> Shlomoe Pestcoe and Greg C. Adams, *Banjo Roots Research: Exploring the Banjo's African American Origins & West African Heritage* (2010).

<sup>361</sup> August Trovaioli and Roulhac Toledano, on the other hand, believe that "Walker's charming *Watermelon Girl* completely lacks the ridicule or satire of many such paintings." Such comments reveal how important it is to contextualize watermelon paintings in the wider visual culture of race and food so as not to miss the racial stereotypes in painting. "William Aiken Walker: Southern Genre Painter," (Gretna: Pelican Publishing, 2007): 107.

painting thus performs an intervention on traditional watermelon imagery, “locating himself and the viewer on the black side of the fence.”<sup>362</sup>

Many admirers of Homer’s “Negro studies” praised the artist for showing “total freedom from conventionalism” and a “sensitive feeling for character.”<sup>363</sup> Other critics, however, missed the subversion of this painting by applauding the artist for his depiction of “little darkies eating their watermelon.”<sup>364</sup> Perhaps this is why Homer was allegedly embarrassed by the popularity of *Watermelon Boys*, which seemed to strengthen stereotypes about African Americans among certain viewers.<sup>365</sup> (FIG. 84) His concerns would have been exacerbated by the engraving of Homer’s painting into print two years later in the *Art Journal*, which altered the original painting in several significant ways. First, the engraving showed Homer’s painted subjects with darker features and cruder facial expressions through dense line-work that exaggerated the boys’ eyes and lips.<sup>366</sup> A second alteration transformed Homer’s original title from “Watermelon Boys” to “Watermelon Eaters,” thereby reducing the sitters to their appetites. Although it is unclear if Homer or the publisher of *Art Journal* engraved this painting into woodblock, it is likely that these changes were implemented to make the depiction more saleable.<sup>367</sup> Perhaps the most significant deviation from Homer’s original painting is the display of a man behind

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<sup>362</sup> Karen Dalton and Peter H. Wood, *Winslow Homer's Images of Blacks: The Civil War and Reconstruction Years* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989), 83. But Homer was not always sympathetic to Black subjects in his paintings. See Calo’s article on Homer to understand the stereotypes that enter his portraits of African Americans for mainstream magazines.

<sup>363</sup> *American Art and American Art Collections* v.2 (1889), 715-719. Quoted in Calo, 5.

<sup>364</sup> Karen Adams, *Black Images in Nineteenth-Century American Painting and Literature: An Iconological Study of Mount, Melville, Homer and Mark Twain* (Dissertation: Emory University, 1977), 135.

<sup>365</sup> Roulhac Toldeano and August Trovaioli, *William Aiken Walker: Southern Genre Painter* (Gretna: Pelican Publishing, 2007), 107.

<sup>366</sup> The cumbersome process of carving subjects into wood may have also lent to the boys’ cruder features.

<sup>367</sup> There is no concrete evidence stating that Homer engraved the woodblock “Watermelon Eaters,” but the artist was a skilled illustrator and engraver, so it is likely.



the wooden fence who angrily waves his staff in the air to chastise the thieves for trespassing onto his property. The inclusion of the watermelon-patch owner in this print raises the stakes of Homer's painting and brings to life the dangerous consequences of Black and White boys stealing watermelon contraband. Viewers had likely come to expect the owner in watermelon imagery to ensure that the boundaries of land and race would ultimately be protected. Interpretations of Homer's *Watermelon Boys* demonstrate the ways in which artists and viewers could use images of fruit to perpetuate, or invert, traditional narratives about race.

Still-life artists might have also used the subject of food to address racial violence in the late-nineteenth century. (FIG. 85) This was not unprecedented since artists like William Michael Harnett likely painted a pimpled and scrawny rooster in the still-life rendering *Sunday's Dinner* to convey working-class struggles and issues of racism.<sup>368</sup> Judith Barter argues that Harnett's depiction of a bird "dead long enough to have been bled, scalded, and plucked" might have been a veiled reference to brutality against African Americans who were widely associated with consuming and stealing roosters at this time.<sup>369</sup> (FIG. 86) A still-life painting by de Scott Evans may have also addressed racial violence in his depiction of two potatoes hanging by their necks and tackled to a door pinned with a note, "The Irish Question." Potatoes were a fitting subject to address the Irish Question and violent protests over Irish independence because this vegetable was closely associated with Irish identity and the potato famine of the 1840s that led

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<sup>368</sup> Judith Barter, *Art and Appetite: American Painting, Culture and Cuisine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 143. Psyche Williams-Forsen more closely analyzes this topic in *Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs*.

<sup>369</sup> Barter, 142-143; Psyche Williams-Forsen, 27, 54.

many struggling farmers to emigrate to America.<sup>370</sup> Given that still lifes of lynched potatoes and plucked roosters may have spoken to racial and class conflict, contemporaneous pictures of stabbed, chewed, and bleeding watermelons might have also tackled similar issues. Painting food would have been a strategic method for artists to render these divisive topics in a more abstract manner, thus encouraging a deeper look into the racial subtexts that exist in still-life paintings.

If still-life paintings of watermelon served as commentaries on racial identity and violence, then depictions of this fruit by Black artists seem especially meaningful. (FIG. 87) Charles Ethan Porter was an African-American artist who painted still lifes of watermelon in the late-nineteenth century. Although most of Porter's paintings focused on apples, grapes, and berries that were abundant in his home-state of Connecticut, he reserved at least two paintings for the subject of watermelon. Porter may have sought to eschew racial stereotypes in these paintings by elevating the subject of watermelon to the heights of fine art and depicting the fruit broken on a stone floor in a natural landscape according to standards set by art critics John Ruskin and Andrew John Henry Way.<sup>371</sup> Porter's watermelon paintings fit neatly within his larger oeuvre of works that depicted "quiet New England life," which critics commended for the "soft effects of light and true coloring [that] give much satisfaction."<sup>372</sup> Treating watermelons with diffuse lighting

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<sup>370</sup> Barter, 146. Still lifes of dead rabbits by George Henry Hall also addressed racial violence and specifically riots by Irish immigrants against the police. For more information on this subject see Ross Barrett's article, "Rioting Refigured: George Henry Hall and the Picturing of American Political Violence" *American Art* 92.3 (Sept. 2010), 211-231.

<sup>371</sup> Andrew John Henry Way, "Fruit-Painting in Oils," 129; Ruskin, *Modern Painters* (1843-1860). Way advised artists to paint the fruit broken into chunks for depiction in still-life painting. Ruskin instructed artists to paint fruit, plants, and landscapes "from nature" in the outdoor landscape.

<sup>372</sup> "Mr. Porter's Paintings," *Hartford Courrant* (Dec. 8, 1898), 5. Found in William Gerdt's Library, New York City.

and impressionistic brushwork sharply deviated from mainstream images that showed the fruit battered and scabbed by knives in a photo-realistic manner. Porter's quiet, painterly portraits of watermelon also diverged from stereotypical depictions that displayed the fruit clawed by Black eaters depicted in minstrel costume. The perspective in Porter's paintings further defied mainstream conventions by offering more space for the viewer to softly approach the watermelon rather than confront it immediately as in most tightly cropped still lifes. Knowing that still-life paintings could carry racial undertones in the late nineteenth century, it is possible that Porter might have focused on the soft, impressionistic qualities of watermelon in his still-life paintings to subtly chisel away at the racial vernacular dominating watermelon imagery in this time period.<sup>373</sup>

(FIG. 88) Porter may have resisted racist imagery of watermelon in the same way that Henry Ossawa Tanner rebelled against racial stereotypes in his painting, *The Banjo Lesson*. *The Banjo Lesson* was originally commissioned for a magazine story that featured stock African-American characters who subscribed to stereotype.<sup>374</sup> Tanner, however, took this opportunity to bring humanity to stereotypical characters like the Black banjo player by painting an elderly Black man sharing a sweet banjo lesson with a young boy. While it is uncertain who is teaching whom how to play the banjo, it is clear

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<sup>373</sup> While Porter's still-life paintings may have distanced watermelon from its racial context, it is hard to resist reading race and color into Porter's larger oeuvre of painting. Color, after all, was a constant topic of discussion in relation to Porter's artwork. Not only was he continuously referred to as a "colored artist," critics noted Porter's "faithful" portrayal of color," "extraordinary eye for color," and how "his sense of color is his strong point, and that as a colorist he is without a rival in the field he has selected." It is intriguing that critics praised Porter, "a colored artist," for being a "colorist." While no art critics directly related Porter's mastery of color to the color of his skin, it would not be surprising if such associations developed in a society so obsessed with race and color. *Hartford Daily Times* (Dec 18 1877); *Hartford Courrant* (Dec. 8, 1898), 5; *New York Tribune*, (Mar. 7, 1878), 4.

<sup>374</sup> This information was learned from Naurice Frank Woods Jr.'s article, "Henry Ossawa Tanner's Negotiation of Race and Art: Challenging the Unknown Tanner," *Journal of Black Studies* (2011), 894. This article is a criticism of research conducted by Will South in "A Missing Question Mark: The Unknown Henry Ossawa Tanner" in *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*.

that Tanner's painting provides a more dignified look at generations of banjo players exchanging musical knowledge. Tanner painted *The Banjo Lesson* to represent the "serious and pathetic" side of Negro life.<sup>375</sup> He explained that "many artists who have represented Negro life have only seen the comic, the ludicrous side of it and have lacked sympathy with an affection for the big heart that dwells within such a rough exterior."<sup>376</sup> *The Banjo Lesson* was a reaction to this trend, which Tanner saw first-hand as a student of Thomas Hovenden, who supported racial stereotype in paintings like *I Know'd It Was Ripe* (FIG. 79). In a time period when racist imagery was so pervasive, Black artists were using painting to dismantle stereotypes wedded to banjos, watermelons, and other racially-loaded objects. The artworks of Porter and Tanner thus present an important model for how artists protested the racial iconography of the nineteenth century. Their paintings also encourage scholars today to not only identify stereotypes in American art, but the ways in which artists dismantled these stereotypes.<sup>377</sup>

### **"You Are What You Eat": Racial Transformation in Representations of Food**

It was no easy task to reverse the watermelon propaganda of the time period since images of Black people eating, and transforming into, watermelon were ubiquitous and ideologically loaded in the late-nineteenth century. (FIG. 89) Several trade cards, in fact,

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<sup>375</sup> Woods, 895, taken from notes by Tanner at the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid.

<sup>377</sup> Michael Hatt would agree that "spotting racism is not enough; the question is, why is it so difficult to dismantle?" This chapter on watermelon representations seeks to honor the goal set out by Hatt to "understand how racism works in the visual field, the purposes it serves, and how art may be implicated in the racial economy." This goal will be better served by continued research on the artwork of contemporary artists Joyce Scott, Carrie Mae Weems, Fred Wilson, and Valerie Jean Hegarty who deconstruct the watermelon stereotype in their artwork today. "Making a Man of Him: Masculinity and the Black Body in Mid-Nineteenth Century American Sculpture" *Oxford Art Journal* 15.1 (1992): 34.

displayed Black faces embedded in the pink flesh of the fruit. With their heads cropped and bodies chopped from the picture plane, the entire identity of these figures is defined by watermelon. Such images postulate that African Americans had watermelon on the brain, or perhaps watermelon slush for brains.<sup>378</sup> (FIG. 90) A trade card for the Boston Dental Association is even more explicit in this cruel agenda by displaying a Black man's face distorted in the shape of a watermelon. In addition to his green, waxy complexion and elongated face, his lips crack open to show red meat that forms the interior of his mouth and white rind that takes the place of his teeth. (FIG. 91) White figures too were depicted in the shape of watermelon on trade cards, but it was their bodies rather than faces that assumed the fruit's figure. This registers a very different sensation since White men with watermelon bodies look cheery and confident in contrast to Black men with watermelon faces who look grotesque and disfigured as their mental faculties have been compromised. Images of Black faces morphing into watermelons served to dehumanize African Americans and literalize the watermelon stereotype for viewers.

Cotton was another inspiration for Black transformations on trade cards. (FIG. 92) Advertisements for seed and fertilizer companies depicted Black cotton pickers morphing into the plant and growing white hair made of the spindly material. Leaves from the cotton plant framed the figures' faces, forming cotton headbands and cotton collars that integrated the plant into the person's physical shape. (FIG. 93) One trade card showed a Black woman's body entirely composed of cotton, losing any sense of anatomy to the

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<sup>378</sup> The idea that watermelon was a physical extension of the Black body is evident in an article from 1897 that described a watermelon "massacre" in which 90 Black convicts abandoned their work to ravage a melon patch. They ate the fruit so ferociously that "no mortal man could tell where the nigger began and the melon left off." "Ninety Convicts in a Melon Patch," *The Atlanta Constitution*, (Aug. 22, 1897), A16.

plant's triangular form. Like watermelon, cotton was pictured as a physical extension of African-American identity and part of a Black person's biological makeup. Images of happy workers dancing with heads of cotton also glossed over the brutality that accompanied labor on cotton plantations and the drudgery that characterized the grueling work of picking cotton.<sup>379</sup> Illustrations of cotton and watermelon were powerful agents in disseminating the malicious stereotype that African Americans were less than human and no more valuable than the crops they ate or planted.<sup>380</sup>

(FIG. 94) The anthropomorphism of food was not restricted to African-American figures; Native Americans too were shown morphing into foods such as wheat and corn. Corn played a central role in these images because it was considered a uniquely American food, pivotal to national dishes such as hominy, cornbread, and corn fritters. It is not surprising then that illustrators paired indigenous foods with Indigenous people. Trade cards specifically showed Native-American bodies made from yellow kernels of corn, bearing arms and legs composed of green corn husks that carry walking sticks and headdresses emblematic of indigeneity. As masters and embodiments of corn, these figures planted a stamp of approval on trade cards selling seeds for cultivating crops.

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<sup>379</sup> These trade cards belonged to the flood of nostalgic images in the late-nineteenth century that depicted happy Black cotton workers laboring on Southern plantations. William Aiken Walker and Currier and Ives also produced romanticized images slavery and plantation life. For more information on this topic, consult John Michael Vlach's *The Planter's Prospect: Privilege and Slavery in Plantation Paintings* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

<sup>380</sup> Unfortunately, a number of today's archives dispose of these trade cards due to their uncomfortable content. Kyla Tompkins argues that this is a disservice to scholars since trade cards and their imagery provide valuable insight into the construction of racial categories in the nineteenth century. Tompkins says that studying racist trade cards serves to "render their historical weight visible and material but also to recognize both sides of their terrible ambivalence, their often loving and intimate as well as deeply hateful depictions of the co-presence of whites and nonwhites in the urban spaces of the late-nineteenth century." p. 151. For a deeper investigation of race and performance in trade cards, consult Tompkins' chapter "Trade Cards and Consumer Citizenship" in her book *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the Nineteenth Century*.

Their knowledge of agriculture, however, was diminished by trade cards that reduced Native Americans to stereotypical objects like corn, headdresses, and the teepee delineated in the background of the trade card for Clark fertilizer. (FIG. 95) Trade cards displaying Dutch women in clogs morphing into heads of cabbages and Asian men with slanted eyes transforming into onions join the chorus of ethnic caricatures from the time period. It is meaningful that advertisements showed colored bodies transforming into corn, cotton, watermelon, and other racially-charged crops of the time period. Trade cards were not merely advertisements intended to grab the viewer's attention, but sites of racial difference and humor where concepts of identity were constructed through food.

By repeatedly manipulating the human form into foods and plants, trade cards maintained the widely held belief, "you are what you eat." Diet experts endorsed this theory in the nineteenth century, declaring that what a person ate directly shaped a person's mental and physical constitution. Writer and critic Francis Grund explained earlier in the century that "what one eats assimilates with us, becomes our own flesh and blood, and influences our temper...Then to reflect that [Americans] are made up of potatoes, raw meat, and doughy pie-crust! The very thought of it is enough to lower our self-respect."<sup>381</sup> Trade cards showing colored bodies transforming into corn and watermelon subscribed to this logic, suggesting that the character of African- and Native-Americans is defined by the foods they eat. This same principle was used to comment on the rice-heavy and meat-impoorished diets of Chinese immigrants, which were thought to create unmanly and un-American bodies in the nineteenth century.<sup>382</sup> Critics targeted

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<sup>381</sup> Francis J. Grund, *Graham's American Monthly Magazine of Literature and Art* v.30 (1847), 337.

<sup>382</sup> Melanie Dupuis, *Gut Wars: The Politics of Dietary Reform*, 2014; Warren Belasco, "The Stakes of Steaks" in *Meals to Come*.

Mexican foods as well, declaring that salsa and tortillas created weaker bodies in comparison to white bread which fortified strong men and women.<sup>383</sup> German diets, on the contrary, were praised by dieticians who exalted “the sturdy German [who] eats his black bread made of the whole grain with a keen appetite. It makes his muscles firm and his sinews strong.”<sup>384</sup> Food, as a result, functioned as a marker of identity and difference in the late-nineteenth century that buttressed the theory “you are what you eat.”

The idea that food determined one’s character and condition placed great importance on every aspect of food, including its color. White sugar, white bread, white pepper, and white flour were all considered healthier and cleaner alternatives to darker versions of the same food.<sup>385</sup> White foods were also thought to form delicate, refined people in contrast to dark foods that supposedly formed coarse and unrefined eaters. Eating, as a result, was thought to determine one’s race in a very immediate way. America’s affection for white foods lasted until the end of the nineteenth century when *The Ladies’ Home Journal* offered methods for coloring an entire meal white. In addition to providing a recipe for a heavy white sauce that would drown dark foods in white, the article also instructed housewives to prepare boiled cod, mashed potatoes, rice,

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<sup>383</sup> Sackman, 166-167. Sackman describes one teacher, Pearl Ellis, who argued that Mexican families needed less salsa and tortillas and more body regulators and builders in “Americanization through Homemaking,” p.19, originally quoted in George Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 102.

<sup>384</sup> Kellogg, 51. This approbation for German cuisine was likely influenced by the fact that many dieticians in America were of German descent and borrowed inventions like the calorie from German dieticians.

<sup>385</sup> The following resources discuss the preference for white sugar over brown sugar: Harvey Levenstein, *Revolution at the Table: The Transformation of the American Diet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 33, 62; Waverly & Richard de Rochemont, *Eating in America: A History* (Hopewell: Ecco Press, 1995), 232; Susan Williams, 122, 124.



and macaroni pudding to create an all-white meal.<sup>386</sup> White foods and dinnerware garnered so much praise because whiteness was associated with the values of purity, cleanliness, and godliness. The fact that most immigrant maids working in the home were considered neither “white” nor “American” may have also propelled efforts to “whiten” the home.<sup>387</sup> Many may have feared that immigrant maids would pollute the White-American family through food-making since food was thought to directly shape the character and purity of the human and national body.<sup>388</sup> Food and its color, therefore, took on great importance in the cultural climate of the late-nineteenth century.

(FIG. 96) The obsession with whiteness is legible in the all-white decor painted by Thomas Hope in *Still Life with Breakfast Setting*. On a white patterned tablecloth, Hope depicted white creamers, shakers, plates, and ivory-handled silverware that blended into a sea of whiteness. Even the eggs, crackers, and bread on the table constituted all white foods. The only non-white object on the table is the yellow butter that adds a dimension of color to this otherwise monochrome spread. Although this table subscribed to ideals of the time period, not everyone supported the campaign for whiteness in the home. Art critic Clarence Cook wrote:

I have elsewhere complained of our American love of white, [white] took the yellow out of the butter, made the milk look blue, cast suspicion on the tea, took all the sparkle out of the sugar, and in short, made it impossible for the breakfast to do itself justice...Fruit

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<sup>386</sup> Laura Shapiro, *Perfection Salad: Women and Cooking at the Turn of the Century*. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986), 94; Bridgette Heneghan, *Whitewashing America: Material Culture and Race in the Antebellum Imagination* (Jacksonville: University Press of Mississippi, 2003), 168-169.

<sup>387</sup> See: Elizabeth O’Leary, “Bridget and Dinah: Images of Difference at Mid-Century, 1836-1876,” *At Beck and Call: The Representation of Domestic Servants in Nineteenth-Century American Painting* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian, 1996), 109-160.

<sup>388</sup> *Ibid.*, 186. Kyla Tompkins also reveals how the kitchen was closely associated with infection and class difference in the nineteenth century in her book, *Racial Indigestion*, 41-43.

does not know how to behave itself when it is put into white china dishes, and eaten off white china plates...these are my complaints about white china.<sup>389</sup>

Cook laments how white has removed all the color, taste, and sparkle from the American table. He specifically singles out fruit for its criminality on white tabletops, saying it “does not know how to behave itself” in the context of white china. Watermelon especially supported this claim since its frosty surface and messy composition would have defiled Hope’s immaculate table. Whitewashing the American table represented a broader mission to maintain White-American standards in the home.

In the book *Whitewashing America*, Bridget Heneghan reveals how the preference for white foods and objects over colored versions held deeper ramifications for the racial hierarchies in American homes. Frederick Douglass addressed this topic in his autobiographies, recalling how he and other slave children ate food from wooden trays and dark-colored ceramics that he understood as Black people’s dismissal from the codes of gentlemanly behavior.<sup>390</sup> Douglass, consequently, encouraged African Americans to practice Victorian etiquette as a way to demonstrate Black participation in the traditions of gentility.<sup>391</sup> This program extended to purchasing pictures for the home, which Douglass said:

Colored Americans have thought little of adorning their parlors with pictures. They have had to do with the stern, and I may say, the ugly realities of life. Pictures come not with slavery and oppression and destitution, but with liberty, fair play, leisure, and refinement. These conditions are not possible to colored American citizens, and I think the walls of their houses will soon begin to hear evidences of their altered relations to the people about them.<sup>392</sup>

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<sup>389</sup> *The House Beautiful: Essays on Beds and Tables Stools and Candlesticks* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong and Co., 1878), 235-236.

<sup>390</sup> Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York: Miller, Orton, and Mulligan, 1855), 31, cited by Heneghan, 16.

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>392</sup> “Letter from Rochester,” (June 14, 1870). Quoted in Peter Marzio’s *Democratic Art: Chromolithography 1840-1900: Pictures for a Nineteenth-Century America* (Amon Carter

Douglass forged a link between pictures and freedom, contending that those with pictures in the home exercise the privilege of choice, taste, and leisure. Douglass would have applied the same theory to the still-life paintings of Charles Ethan Porter, which not only subverted racial stereotypes by painting watermelons against convention but also symbolized African-American talent and taste for pictures. Dining-room pictures and objects, in the eyes of Douglass, could be a device for cultural uplift and social mobility in the Black home.

Douglass advised African Americans to follow Victorian rules in the home because he understood that the home, and not just the public sphere, was a battleground for fighting racism. In her essay, “Racial Equality Begins at Home,” Sarah Luria explains how Douglass reversed Black stereotypes in his house by assigning a regal name to his home, building his home on a lot with a grand view overlooking the nation’s Capitol, and filling his home with artworks that subscribed to mainstream Victorian conventions.<sup>393</sup> By upholding upper-class, White traditions in the home, Douglass believed that Blacks could achieve an equal footing with Whites. (FIG. 97) Several trade cards, however, mocked African Americans for adopting White-Victorian customs, including an advertisement that displayed a Black couple transporting a Domestic Sewing Machine tethered to the back of their cart. The woman in the scene excitedly raises her hand and proclaims “Wes don got de “DOMESTIC,” we has!” Although African Americans could buy a Domestic sewing machine and thereby buy into the broader culture of Victorian domesticity, the Black adoption of Victorian conventions look

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Museum, 1979), 104, originally cited in Katherine Morrison McClinton, *The Chromolithographs of Louis Prang* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1973), 37.

<sup>393</sup> Sarah Luria, “Racial Equality Begins at Home: Frederick Douglass’s Challenge to American Domesticity,” *The American Home: Material Culture, Domestic Space, and Family Life*. Ed. by Eleanor McD. Thompson (Wintherthur, 1998): 25-45.

unnatural in these trade cards as a result of their exaggerated gestures and colorful clothing that defy Victorian etiquette. These images suggest that no matter how far African Americans step outside their station, they could never truly achieve refinement or “go domestic.”

### **Conclusion**

Depictions that show African Americans flubbing the rules of Victorian etiquette draw a full circle to the cultural failures of African Americans pictured in racist imagery of watermelon from the late-nineteenth century. In showing Black eaters clawing their fingers into watermelons and salivating over the fruit, images of watermelon gelled with the wider culture of trade cards and illustrations that similarly depicted African Americans living outside the bounds of Victorian culture. Images of Black thieves stealing watermelons from unguarded patches presented an especially nasty portrait of African-American people, depicting them as criminals unable to abate their appetite for the fruit. Watermelon was the perfect subject to portray the perceived unruliness of African Americans because watermelons themselves were unruly, a delinquent fruit that soiled tables and splattered seeds on every surface they touched. This fruit, in other words, rejected all of the values embedded in the whitewashed home. The watermelon’s role in seed-spitting contests, diuretic treatments, and alcohol culture made the fruit even more useful for representing Black intemperance. In a culture of “you are what you eat,” watermelons were considered as uncontrollable as those who ate them. Watermelons and their representation in paintings, photographs, trade cards, and silverware, therefore, played a meaningful role in the discourses of racism in the late-nineteenth century.

The politics underlining images of watermelon are no less prevalent today. (FIG. 98) As recently as October of 2014, a political cartoon published by the *Boston Herald* adopted the subject of watermelon to discuss an intruder who jumped over the White House fence and infiltrated President Barack Obama's home. Illustrator Jerry Holbert showed the assailant soaping himself in Obama's bathtub, while asking the President who brushes his teeth, "Have you tried the new watermelon flavored toothpaste?"<sup>394</sup> The President's eyes and famously big ears grow even larger upon finding the intruder in his bathroom. By posing this question about watermelon toothpaste to the Black president, Holbert's cartoon taps into a long visual and cultural history that used watermelon to diminish the integrity of African-American people. The use of watermelon for a cartoon about an intruder in the White House is especially meaningful given the visual history of Black intruders trespassing onto unguarded watermelon patches. The title of this cartoon, "White House Invader Got Farther Than Originally Thought," specifically strikes a chord with historic and contemporary issues about Black access to white land and 'White Houses.' Although many believe that the watermelon stereotype "should have spoiled and died on the vine" by now,<sup>395</sup> Holbert's cartoon perpetuates the racial legacy of watermelon originally reproduced in *Puck* cartoons, minstrel song sheets, and on the heads of spoons.<sup>396</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> This is one of several cartoons that implicated Obama in the watermelon stereotype. Another famous image displays the White House Lawn during Easter with rows of watermelon in place of Easter eggs.

<sup>395</sup> Theodore Johnson, "Racism in 2013?? Just Get Over It!" *Huffington Post* (Jul. 8, 2013).

<sup>396</sup> Weeks after Holbert's cartoon was released, another event resurrected the watermelon stereotype. In November of 2014, Daniel Handler (author of popular children's book *Lemony Snicket*) invited National Book Award winner and African-American children's author, Jacqueline Woodson, to the stage by saying: "I said that if [Woodson] won [the National Book Award] I would tell all of you something I learned about her this summer. Jackie Woodson is allergic to watermelon. Just let that sink in your minds." In jesting about the Black author's

Holbert eventually rewrote the cartoon and substituted raspberry for watermelon flavored toothpaste, but the reincarnation of this drawing does not erase the charged meaning of the fruit. The continued relevance of the watermelon stereotype urges scholars to more seriously consider the visual mechanics of watermelon and its meanings in American art and visual culture. The charged history of watermelon in visual representation also urges scholars to more broadly consider food and drink in American art. The ways in which artists resisted the racial politics underlying foods like watermelon deserve an equal amount of attention. More research on African-American artists such as Charles Ethan Porter might demonstrate how painting was a useful device in subverting racial stereotypes.<sup>397</sup> Future examinations on the cultivation of watermelon in slave gardens and African-American owned watermelon patches might demonstrate another mode of resistance and a history in which watermelons symbolized Black power and agency. These inquiries not only help to identify systems of racism, but also dismantle the systems that generate prejudice. Excavating the cultural meanings buried in representations of watermelon ultimately reveal how Americans used this fruit to conceptualize ideas about race and identity.

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aversion to watermelon, Handler revived a deep-seated racial stereotype rooted in a long history of racism towards African Americans. Woodson responded to Handler's remarks in an article in the *New York Times* entitled, "The Pain of the Watermelon Joke," Nov. 28, 2014.

<sup>397</sup> Future versions of this chapter will feature the artwork of contemporary artists Joyce Scott, Carrie Mae Weems, Fred Wilson, and Valerie Jean Hegarty who deconstruct the watermelon stereotype in their artwork today. The controversial mural of African Americans eating watermelon for a panel on emancipation also warrants future investigation. "Court Art Altered on Negro Protest," *New York Times* (Dec. 1, 1936).

## Chapter Four

### Seeing Spots: The Fever for Bananas, Land, and Power in American Art

(FIG. 99) In 1871, the lithography company Currier and Ives distributed the print, *Fruits of the Tropics*. The still-life picture reads like a balancing act in which grapes are perched on top of a pineapple that leans into a pile of bananas, which squeeze in between a tower of oranges and lemons. Removing one fruit from the picture plane threatens to dismantle the whole composition. It is significant that Currier and Ives selected bananas for the center of the picture. Bananas were considered a rare fruit in the 1870s; only one of every 10,000 residents in America had ever seen a banana when this still life was published.<sup>398</sup> What might viewers have learned about this fruit upon seeing it in a still-life print? History indicates that Americans did not easily embrace foreign fruits. In the 1840s, President Martin van Buren famously complained that pineapples were “too decadent” and aristocratic.<sup>399</sup> Horticulturist Andrew Jackson Downing described pears as “pompous” fruits.<sup>400</sup> The native apple, in contrast, was considered “beyond all question, the American fruit” and a “genuine democrat” according to Henry Ward Beecher.<sup>401</sup> Fruit, in the American imagination, was more than a nutritional object for sustenance, but a cultural signifier that expressed national, economic, and political identities. Bananas are no different, playing a meaningful role in the production of nationhood and empire.

Bananas are one of the most powerful signifiers of empire in North America because the fruit has typically been an imported good, travelling far distances from

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<sup>398</sup> Mark H. Goldberg, *Going Bananas: 100 Years of Fruit Ships in the Caribbean* (American Merchant Marine History Series, 1993): 3.

<sup>399</sup> Philip Pauly, *Fruits and Plains: The Horticultural Transformation of America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 67-69.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid.

<sup>401</sup> Bruce Weber, *The Apple of America: The Apple in Nineteenth-Century American Art* (New York: Berry-Hill Galleries, 1993).

tropical locales. For this reason, Americans in the nineteenth and twentieth century considered bananas an exotic fruit and culinary trophy, symbolic of America's commercial reach in the Tropics. The tide of the banana trade turned in the early twentieth century when three American entrepreneurs joined forces to create the United Fruit Company, bringing bananas from Central America and the Caribbean to the masses in North America. United Fruit formed a monopoly over the banana business and exerted profound influence over the political and economic landscape in Central America through theft, bribery, and other dirty tactics. The United Fruit Company's murky role in Latin-American politics was disguised by images produced in company cookbooks and pamphlets, until the late twentieth- and early twenty-first centuries when several artists started to unravel the politics of banana culture in Latin America and disentangle the American government's part in this knotted history. An investigation into the visual culture of bananas thus requires an expansive look at the fruit across three centuries to understand the ways in which the banana trade influenced imperial and pictorial agendas over time. Exploring the politics of banana culture reveals how the United States went to unsavory lengths to profit from the fruit.

### **"Landing Bananas": The Arrival of Tropical Fruit on American Soil**

Bananas are not indigenous to North America, despite their remarkably swift incorporation into the American diet. The fruit was originally grown in Asia, and later spread to Africa and the Americas by Arab and Spanish colonists.<sup>402</sup> Apart from a few instances in which early colonists acquired red bananas from Cuba, the fruit was widely

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<sup>402</sup> According to James Wiley, Polynesians carried bananas to Hawaii, Arabs spread the fruit to coastal Africa, and the Spanish introduced bananas to the broader Americas. *The Banana: Empires, Trade Wars, and Globalization* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 4-5.



unavailable to Americans in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>403</sup> After several unsuccessful attempts to grow bananas in the semi-tropical climates of Florida and California, North Americans realized that it was cheaper to grow bananas in Central America and the Caribbean.<sup>404</sup> Many Americans learned about the banana by looking back at the words of explorer Alexander von Humboldt, who wondered “whether there is any plant on the globe which, in so small a space of ground, can produce so great a mass of nutriment.”<sup>405</sup> Surpassing the usefulness of wheat and potatoes, Humboldt privileged the banana over all other foods and declared that they “will furnish subsistence for fifty individuals, which, in wheat, would not furnish food for two.”<sup>406</sup> An article on bananas in *Godey’s Magazine* from 1864 recounted Humboldt’s perspective and described the nutritional benefits of the tropical fruit.<sup>407</sup> It is noteworthy that *Godey’s* published this article during the last years of the Civil War when the North had imposed an embargo on the South, prohibiting goods from entering the region’s ports. The closing of the Civil War in 1865 and the lifting of this embargo would soon help the banana trade advance

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<sup>403</sup> Virginia Scott Jenkins finds evidence that the banana first reached Salem, Massachusetts in 1690. There were also reports in 1804 describing 20 stalks of red bananas brought to America from Cuba. Later reports claim that a Captain John Pearsall delivered 150 banana stalks to Eastern ports in 1850. *Bananas: An American History* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Press, 2000), xi, 41.

<sup>404</sup> These attempts proved futile because there is too much frost for the banana to grow in states like California and Florida.

<sup>405</sup> Alexander Humboldt and Aimé Bonpland, *Personal Narratives of the Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of America during the Years 1799-1804*, Tr. and Ed. by Thomasina Ross (London: 1852); Cited by Soluri, “Banana Cultures: Linking the Production and Consumption of Export Bananas, 1800-1980,” in *Banana Wars: Power, Production, and History in the Americas* Ed. by Steve Striffler and Mark Moberg (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 50, 192.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid. Andrew Jackson Downing also said “in the tropical zone, amid the surprising luxuriance of vegetation of that great natural hot-house, nature offers to man, almost without care, the most refreshing, the most delicious, and the most nutritive fruits. The plantain and Banana, excellent either raw or cooked, bearing all the year, and producing upon a rood of ground the sustenance of a family...such are the natural fruit-trees of those glowing climates.” Andrew Jackson Downing, *The Fruits and Fruit-Trees of America* (New York: Wiley and Sons, 1888), 1.

<sup>407</sup> “The Banana Tree,” *Godey’s Lady’s Book* (Jan. 1864).

forward with shipments of the fruit from Cuba, Honduras, and Jamaica to ports in New Orleans, Birmingham, and Mobile.<sup>408</sup> Technological advancements in refrigeration from the Civil War also paved the way for bananas to reach ports as far north as Philadelphia, New York, and Boston, greatly facilitating the banana trade in North America.

Given that New York City was one of the major ports for banana shipments, it is natural that bananas would appear in pictures by Currier and Ives, a firm based in this city. (FIG. 100) An illustration by Currier and Ives entitled “Landing Bananas” in *Harper’s Weekly* from 1870 confirms the banana’s arrival in New York, showing a handful of the fruit on the edges of a waterfront slip.<sup>409</sup> In describing this scene as a “landing” of bananas, *Harper’s Weekly* conceptualizes the fruit as an immigrant subject landing on the shores of the New World. On the right side of the slip, a distributor sells the foreign fruit to a man elegantly dressed, indicating how one needed a generous budget to purchase such an expensive food. The man reaches for the fruit, divided into four tiers like a layered cake, which is an appropriate comparison since bananas were often served as dessert in American meals. The fruit’s sweet taste and easy preparation made it popular among consumers who praised the banana, saying:

Too much cannot be said of this right royal fruit. No knife is needed in getting it ready for eating. Its soft golden skin is ready at a moment’s notice to part from the fragrant meat; it comes away without an effort, leaving no stain, and the most fastidious lady needs no handkerchief in eating a banana, for it is most emphatically a “kid-glove” fruit.<sup>410</sup>

This ready-to-eat, “kid-glove” fruit was in high demand by the late-nineteenth century, “fast rivaling the orange in popular use.”<sup>411</sup> The fruit was so popular that its exhibition at

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<sup>408</sup> Goldberg, 52.

<sup>409</sup> John Soluri confirms how bananas were not only sold in stores but also by fruit peddlers on the docks. *Banana Wars*, 38.

<sup>410</sup> W.W. James, “Bananas,” *The Florida Agriculturist* 19.6 (Feb. 10, 1892), 82.

<sup>411</sup> “Godey’s Arm-Chair,” *Godey’s Lady’s Book* (Jun. 1875).

the Philadelphia Centennial required security guards to prevent visitors from stealing them off trees in the Horticultural Hall.<sup>412</sup> Unlike most American attitudes towards new and foreign foods, consumers in the United States wanted more bananas, thereby encouraging foreign investments in banana capital.

The growing availability of bananas in North America closely paralleled the growing visibility of bananas in American pictures. (FIG.101) Artist John George Brown depicted the fruit in his painting *Banana Boy*, which portrayed a bootblack cheerfully inspecting a banana in his right hand during a pause from work. The yellow color and curved slope of the banana shares a visual resemblance with the boy's yellowed shirt and sloped posture. This fruit, which cost as much as ten cents apiece in the 1880s, would have been quite a treat for the bootblack who likely belonged to a lower class.<sup>413</sup> Perhaps he sought out the banana knowing that its tender texture would not offend his mouth of missing teeth. Although it is unclear how a bootblack would have accessed such an expensive fruit, he might have been unfamiliar with the banana since he clutches it upside down, pointing the top nub of the fruit towards the ground. Consumers unfamiliar with bananas also confused the fruit with other foods, prompting cautionary tales in *Godey's Magazine* that warned: "BROWN bananas don't look unlike sausages. The mistake was made by a German a few days since."<sup>414</sup> The likeness between bananas and sausages is perhaps not so outrageous considering that Americans in the late-nineteenth century ate the Gros Michel banana, a thicker and stouter variety compared to the Cavendish variety

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<sup>412</sup> Jenkins, 11.

<sup>413</sup> There is some debate about the cost of the banana in the late-nineteenth century. While some scholars believe that the banana was costly, by the end of the century, John Soluri finds that bananas were cheaper than apples. Soluri also believes that the banana was "used in almost all racial and social groups" in New York City. Soluri, 56-57.

<sup>414</sup> "This Seems Liberal in the Offer of a Southern College for a Young..." *Godey's Lady's Book* (Nov. 1871).

eaten today.<sup>415</sup> Brown's painting documents the type of bananas eaten in nineteenth-century America and the country's early encounters with this exotic fruit.

In the lower register of Brown's painting, viewers also see a banana that has been peeled, eaten, and jettisoned to the ground. Brown may have painted a discarded banana peel to evoke the fantasy of a person foolishly sliding on its slippery peel. This type of banana humor pervaded trade cards, song sheets, and other forms of popular vernacular culture in the late-nineteenth century.<sup>416</sup> Brown recreated this joke with the viewer by painting a banana peel beside the bootblack's feet, creating an opportunity to trip up someone else's shoes. The peeled banana became a familiar trope in still-life pictures and advertisements that also invited viewers to take a bite of the yellow fruit. (FIG. 102)

Peeled fruits frequently appeared in the hands of women, calling to mind a woman peeling off her clothes or, in the case of a banana, the clothes of an erect man.<sup>417</sup> The banana's shape was so suggestive that historian Virginia Jenkins believes fruit sellers purposely peeled, sliced, and wrapped the banana in foil to obscure its provocative figure.<sup>418</sup> Brown and other artists tapped into the off-colored humor of the banana, inviting viewers to shed their fruit peels and inhibitions when handling the tropical fruit.

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<sup>415</sup> Soluri, 52. The Gros Michel (known as "Big Mike") was favored by shippers for its sturdiness and imperviousness to bruises. This variety was also creamier and allegedly tastier than the Cavendish eaten today. Dan Koeppel, *Banana: The Fate of the Fruit that Changed the World* (New York: Plume Publications, 2008), xiv.

<sup>416</sup> *Arthur's Home Magazine* printed one of the earliest stories about the banana peel in 1868, describing a boy who ran and slipped on a banana peel, falling on the doorstep of his house. "The Home Circle: Bananas-One Cent" (Aug. 1, 1868), 120-122.

<sup>417</sup> I am currently searching for more examples of advertisements that show peeled bananas.

<sup>418</sup> Jenkins, 52. Despite their provocative shape, bananas themselves are an asexual fruit, requiring human assistance for reproduction because they cannot reproduce easily on their own. Koeppel, xiii.

(FIG. 103) Before Brown painted a bootblack in possession of a banana, Hannah Brown Skeele painted one of the earliest images of the banana in American art.<sup>419</sup> In *Fruit Piece* from 1860, Skeele pictured a white, reticulated basket cradling tropical fruits such as oranges, bananas, a lemon and a pineapple. Equally luxurious for the time period was the filigree bowl of cubed sugar sitting adjacent to the bounty of fruit.<sup>420</sup> The inclusion of a green, unripe banana with a brown, over-ripe banana hugging both sides of the bowl reflects the hardships of a still-life painter, who had to negotiate the depiction of unripe fruit on canvas. Little had changed by the 1880s when artist Andrew John Henry Way discussed the temporal challenges for still-life painters, explaining that “the vivid color of fresh fruit rapidly fades and gives one but a limited time at best in which to perpetuate its beauties.”<sup>421</sup> Way advised that “the painting [of fruit] should be done as rapidly as possible.”<sup>422</sup> Compared to the ripe and crisply colored apple in the forefront of Skeele’s composition, the browning banana in her painting reflects the delicate nature of fruit and the race against time to capture these yellow novelties on canvas.<sup>423</sup>

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<sup>419</sup> Hannah Brown Skeele (who may have gone by Harriet) was an award-winning still-life painter. She was born in Kennebunkport, Maine, and shortly moved to St. Louis, Missouri in 1845, eventually returning to Maine in 1871. In St. Louis, she painted portraits, animal pictures, and still lifes—which may have been influenced by the paintings of John Francis which were exhibited in St. Louis or the paintings of Sarah Peale (the daughter of James Peale) who worked in St. Louis around the same time. For more information, consult: Martha Gandy Fales, “Hannah B. Skeele, Maine Artist” *Antiques* 121.4 (Apr. 1982): 915-921.

<sup>420</sup> Interestingly, Skeele painted and exhibited this artwork in St. Louis, Missouri, where she may have accessed such exotic goods through close proximity to Southern ports. For more information on Skeele, see: Sarah E. Kelly, “Fruit Piece,” *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 30.1 (2004): 12-13, 94; Barter, *True to the Senses*, 36.

<sup>421</sup> Andrew John Henry Way, “Fruit-Painting in Oils,” *The Art Amateur* 16.2 (Jan. 1887), 31-32.

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>423</sup> Because the portrayal of bananas so closely mirrored the development of a banana industry, scholars can use the fruit to loosely date still-life paintings. With the exception of bananas produced in hothouses, or copied from horticultural engravings, bananas can help date still-life paintings to a time period after the Civil War.

Advancements in refrigeration and ice-box technologies profoundly improved the delivery of ripe bananas to North America and helped delay the ripening of bananas along the three week cross-country voyage on sail-driven schooners.<sup>424</sup> In the last years of the nineteenth century, schooners were then replaced by faster steam-powered ships that could carry between 13,000 and 19,000 bunches of bananas.<sup>425</sup> Once the fruits arrived to North American shores, they were immediately driven to cold storage warehouses in refrigerated railroad cars—another invention that transformed the global fruit trade in America.<sup>426</sup> Bananas were chilled with blocks of ice in warehouses until they were ready for sale.<sup>427</sup> It was truly ice that made this precarious operation possible. Ice, which was considered “big business” in the nineteenth century, completely overhauled the food industry that now hinged on this new technology.<sup>428</sup> With ice and other innovations, shipments of fresh fruit increased fifteen-fold between 1880 and 1895.<sup>429</sup> Advancements in ice refrigeration marshaled in a new era in banana production that delivered fresh fruit from long distances that once seemed unimaginable.

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<sup>424</sup> Koeppel, 52.

<sup>425</sup> Henry R. Blaney, *The Golden Caribbean: A Winter Visit to the Republics of Colombia, Costa Rica, Spanish Honduras, Belize and the Spanish Main Via Boston and New Orleans* (Boston: Lee and Shepherd, 1900), 70.

<sup>426</sup> Susanne Freidberg, *Fresh: A Perishable History* (New York: Belknap Press, 2010), 134. In this book, Freidberg also explains how freshness is a social construct that developed in the nineteenth century when many Americans started to want meats and foods to be recently “alive” and “fresh.” Freidberg, 69.

<sup>427</sup> Blaney, 70.

<sup>428</sup> Koeppel, 55. Thomas Moore invented the ice box in 1803. The invention of ice was simply revolutionary, according to Koeppel. Elaine McIntosh, *American Food Habits in Historical Perspective* (New York: Praeger Publishing, 1995). 84.

<sup>429</sup> Freidberg, 137-138.

### **From Field to Table: The Cultivation of Fruit and Progress in North America**

The challenges of delivering bananas to North America matched the challenges of actually cultivating the fruit. Bananas are more demanding than many fruits because their growing season lasts 14 months—weeks and months longer than many fruit seasons. Cultivating bananas also required a complete transformation of the landscape due to the construction of railroad tracks and clearing of trees. Banana workers would then dig rows and rows of irrigation ditches to provide moisture for the soil.<sup>430</sup> Workers planted recycled roots from old banana stalks into the soil, knowing that it would eventually erode after a few years and thus this arduous process would have to be repeated in an entirely different location.<sup>431</sup> After the land was prepared for harvesting, workers applied chemicals to the fruit that in many cases led to serious health problems for laborers.<sup>432</sup> Workers also risked their lives by working in an environment with poisonous mosquitoes and snakes that could bite while planting and pruning the fruit.<sup>433</sup> Once the bananas had grown over several months, laborers cut the fruit while green, washed them and wrapped them in plastic, and loaded them on cables for packing and distributing on the railroad.<sup>434</sup> Loading bananas was one of the most strenuous tasks; it involved lifting banana hands that weighed up to 100 pounds.<sup>435</sup> After performing this back-breaking work under scorching temperatures, workers rushed to get the fruit to air-conditioned cabins within

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<sup>430</sup> Cindy Forster, “The Macondo of Guatemala’: Banana Workers and National Revolution in Tiquisate, 1944-1954,” *Banana Wars: Power, Production, and History in the Americas* Ed. by Steve Striffler and Mark Moberg (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003): 201.

<sup>431</sup> Ibid.

<sup>432</sup> 202.

<sup>433</sup> Peter Chapman, *Bananas: How the United Fruit Company Shaped the World* (Canongate, 2009), 78.

<sup>434</sup> Forster, 201.

<sup>435</sup> Blaney, 72.

ships before the bananas fully ripened.<sup>436</sup> Ship-hands then performed the risky job of transporting the fruit in unpredictable weather and with unreliable navigation systems. Considering the dangerous circumstances for cultivating bananas, it is surprising that the fruit made it at all to American shores.

The brutal conditions for banana production are completely omitted from paintings by John George Brown and Hannah Brown Skeelee. Nowhere in these pictures do viewers get the sense that banana cultivation incited danger, illness, chemical exposure and, in many cases, death. Only the brown bruises painted on bananas allude to the challenges of transporting tropical fruit to North American tables. (FIG. 104) The still-life paintings of Samuel Marsden Brookes similarly cloud the conditions of labor for banana cultivation. In California, Brookes painted only the ripest and freshest fruits, as evident by the fact that many of them still retain their leaves and sprays of foliage in his paintings. In one of his most picturesque still lifes, Brookes displayed figs, berries, a pineapple, and a handful of bananas on a tabletop seated next to a window that shows a sprawling green lawn framed by a tree-lined sky. By placing fruit adjacent to this landscape, viewers wonder if these fruits were grown upon the grounds just outside of view. The placement of fruit next to a Sèvres teapot imported from Western Europe, however, calls into question the location of this fruit and where it was originally cultivated. By editing out all of the information relating to the labor and transportation of tropical fruit, Brookes' painting makes fruits like bananas seem immediately available. Brooke's painting essentially shortens the banana's journey from farm to table and belies the amount of labor required to cultivate bananas for American consumers.

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<sup>436</sup> Ibid., 70. This is why banana plantations were located so close to railroad hubs in order to ensure their quick journey to ships.



Earlier Dutch still-life paintings were designed to achieve the same affect. Julie Berger Hochstrasser argues that artists in the Dutch gilded age of still-life painting strove to “transform remote and costly commodities into objects that seem immediate and available.”<sup>437</sup> (FIG. 105) This strategy is visible in the still-life paintings of Dutch artist Jan Davidsz de Heem, who painted many of the culinary trophies won by Dutch explorers in the Tropics. The commercial wealth of the Dutch empire is emphasized by the sheer abundance of food in de Heem’s painting that includes lobsters, oranges, and meat carcasses. Hochstrasser argues that the Dutch conquest of land and resources was “naturalized by the repetition of fruits that are rearranged over and over in still life paintings.”<sup>438</sup> The author concludes that Dutch still-life paintings functioned as a form of “pictorial capitalism” which absorbed tropical food, land, and people into the robust Dutch empire.<sup>439</sup> Although American artists did not paint still lifes as elaborate or gluttonous as the Dutch, they borrowed the pictorial arrangement and lighting effects of still-life paintings from Dutch masters.<sup>440</sup> What better way to visualize American wealth and power than to replicate Dutch still-life painting? By lifting elements from Dutch still-life art, American painters leveled their own nation with the commercially powerful Dutch Republic.

In North America, fruit was especially useful in communicating power because fruit cultivation played an important role in the national agenda to accumulate land and

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<sup>437</sup> Julie Berger Hochstrasser, *Still Life and Trade in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 255.

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.

<sup>440</sup> American artists studied Dutch paintings in books and engravings and in the private collections of Henry Clay Frick, Charles Wilson Peale, and Nicholas Longworth in New York, Philadelphia, and Cincinnati. For more information on this subject, consult Nancy T. Minty’s “Great Expectations, the Golden Age Redeems the Gilded Era” in *Going Dutch: The Dutch Presence in America, 1600-2009* (Boston: Brill, 2008).

colonize the American continent. Horticultural manuals directly implicated fruit growers in the mission of Manifest Destiny, suggesting that they were integral to expanding the nation by cultivating the outlying frontiers.<sup>441</sup> The installation of orchards, vineyards, and orange groves were all perceived to advance national progress by converting areas of wilderness into “civilized gardens.” This idea was reinforced by the legacy of Johnny Appleseed (née Johnny Chapman) who distributed fruit seeds to farmers in Pennsylvania and Ohio so that they might cultivate territory in the American West and reap the attendant financial rewards.<sup>442</sup> Edward Mansfield, editor of the *Cincinnati Chronicle*, also recognized the importance of fruit to territorial expansion in his 1850 lecture to the Cincinnati Horticultural Society, declaring that “We are now entering the era of high and finished civilization...The race of Pontiac and Little Turtle has disappeared! ...a new race has come...A stronger race, a better destiny, a higher glory...will soon build the house of a new and better Garden.”<sup>443</sup> Cultivating “America’s garden” thus depended on the conquest of territory and the domination over indigenous populations like the “Pontiac and Little Turtle.” These sentiments circulating the nineteenth century reveal how the cultivation of fruit often worked in service of national expansion.

Because fruit cultivation was considered a measurement of progress and civilization in North America, many horticulturists perceived their work in the field or

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<sup>441</sup> A more thorough investigation of this subject is present in chapters one and two of this text.

<sup>442</sup> For a cultural history of Johnny Appleseed, see: Michael Pollan, *The Botany of Desire: A Plant’s Eye View of the World* (New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2001), 3-9, 16-19 and Robert Price, *Johnny Appleseed: Man and Myth* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1954).

<sup>443</sup> Edward Mansfield, *Address Delivered before the Horticultural Society* (Cincinnati: Wright, Ferris, and Co., Oct. 4, 1850) Cincinnati Museum Center, Pamphlets Collection, Reference Number 635 M287.

hothouse as a higher calling and enlightened form of art.<sup>444</sup> Citrus maven Luther Burbank specifically hoisted fruit growing to the heights of fine art by claiming that “we have learned that plant life is as plastic as clay in the hands of the artist. Plants can be more readily molded into more beautiful forms and colors than any sculptor can hope to equal.”<sup>445</sup> Horticulturist Liberty Hyde Bailey agreed that “horticulture...is a means of expressing the art-sense. Plant-forms and plant-colors are as expressive as the canvas work of the painter.”<sup>446</sup> Bailey concluded that “Landscape making...is fundamentally a fine art” and more expressive than painting since fruits “are things themselves, with individuality and life” and not the mere “suggestions of things.”<sup>447</sup> Horticulturists further likened fruit to art by collecting fruit specimens and displaying them in personal galleries.<sup>448</sup> Fruit, in this sense, was treated as an artistic representation with aesthetic qualities that horticulturists considered like artists. The conceptualization of fruit as art reveals how fruit growing participated in the broader national mission to create an advanced and enlightened society.

Many horticulturists elevated fruit growing in America at the expense of fruit growers in the Tropics. Andrew Jackson Downing, for one, described banana growers in the Tropics as slow and lazy, “indolently seated under their shade, and finding a refreshing coolness both from their ever verdant canopy of leaves, and their juicy

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<sup>444</sup> Vintners, in particular, believed that cultivating grapes belonged to a “higher order of agriculture” in which their skills outranked those of commercial farmers and orchardists. Erica Hannickel, *An Imperial Vineland: The Culture of the Grape in Nineteenth Century America*, Dissertation (Iowa City: University of Iowa: 2008), 182.

<sup>445</sup> Cited in Noel Kingsbury, *Hybrid: The History & Science of Plant Breeding* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 356. Quoted originally by George Gessert, “Notes on Genetic Art,” *Leonardo* 26 (1993): 205-211.

<sup>446</sup> Erica Hannickel, *Empire of Vines: Wine Culture in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 3.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid.

<sup>448</sup> Ibid., 41.

fruits.”<sup>449</sup> “It is not here,” Downing concluded, “that we must look for the patient and skillful cultivator. But, in the temperate climates, nature wears a harsher and sterner aspect.”<sup>450</sup> An earlier article from 1849 painted a similar portrayal of tropical fruit growers, saying:

The men of bananas are not the men of muscle or mind--not the men among whom free, Christian institutions can be successfully introduced, and the arts of production, fabrication, and exchange, be made to flourish. The latitude of the banana...produces food without the necessity of physical or intellectual exertion on the part of those who are to consume it...<sup>451</sup>

This article depicts people in “banana latitudes” as weak and uncivilized and lacking the will to cultivate fruit in a climate where “nature produces food without the necessity of physical or intellectual exertion.” Stereotypes about the lazy Tropics even extended to descriptions of the actual banana, which was described as having “broad leaves waving in the breeze and fanning in lazy repose...”<sup>452</sup> These depictions resonated with climate theorists who postulated that people in Northern climates were more resourceful and virtuous than those in Southern climates who did not have to overcome the noble challenge of living in an inhospitable environment. Such opinions reiterate how the cultivation of fruit like bananas could represent the social progress or decline of a society.

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<sup>449</sup> Downing, *The Fruits and Fruit-Trees of America*, 1.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid.

<sup>451</sup> “Western Correspondence: Letters about the West,” *The National Era* (Jul. 19, 1849).

<sup>452</sup> Ibid. An article in *The Christian Recorder* also discussed the ease of banana labor, saying “It takes about a year for stalk and fruit to mature from the first planting, but then there is never any more trouble with the crop, scarcely any hoeing or weeding, no culture, only 'slay and eat...Certainly it is the greatest boon ever bestowed on the indolent tropics. A native swinging in his hammock, with a bunch of ripe bananas hanging in reach on one side, and a smoldering fire on the other, by which he may light his little cigar without getting up, is a most perfect picture of contentment.” “Bananas in Brazil,” *The Christian Recorder* (Nov. 3, 1866).

**‘The Raw and the Cooked’: The Transformation of the Banana Trade under the United Fruit Company**

The banana’s association with the uncivilized Tropics made its assimilation in North America all the more pressing. Cookbook authors helped civilize bananas from the “indolent tropics” by folding the fruit into traditional American recipes for banana ham rolls, banana fritters, and banana salad.<sup>453</sup> Bananas were also featured in American desserts, including banana Jell-O, banana trifle, banana pie, and banana bread pudding.<sup>454</sup> Baking bananas into American meals was a powerful way of assimilating the food into North American diets and “elevating” it to American standards. Claude Levi-Strauss contemplated the social agency of food in “The Raw and the Cooked,” the first volume in his series, *Mythologiques*.<sup>455</sup> In examining food myths constructed by societies across the world, Levi-Strauss demonstrates how cooking for many cultures is a socializing process in which the cook, a cultural agent, transforms a raw object from the natural world into a cooked item for society.<sup>456</sup> The act of cooking, grilling, roasting, and boiling all constitute processes of socialization that ensure raw and “natural” foods become cooked and refined. (FIG. 106) The creation of banana bowls, orange spoons, watermelon

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<sup>453</sup> *Godey’s Ladies Book* published a number of banana recipes that include the fruit in soups, stews, hashes, and meals for breakfast to be served with tea. A small number of recipes retain their foreign origins, including recipes for “West Indian Dessert” (Nov. 1887), “Spanish Fruit Pudding” (May 1891), and (Sept. 1879) “Salamagundi”—fruit salad stirred with sugar on ice.

<sup>454</sup> Soluri, 56.

<sup>455</sup> Claude Levi-Strauss, *Mythologiques: The Raw and the Cooked* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969).

<sup>456</sup> In focusing primarily on indigenous cultures in Brazil, Levi-Strauss concludes that social conventions determine what foods are edible and digestible. He finds great meaning in the way societies treat raw food versus cooked food and how the simple act of growing or cooking food is a method of civilization that humans use to separate foods, and societies, from their natural and original state. Levi-Strauss writes, “The raw/cooked axis is characteristic of culture; the fresh/decayed one of nature, since cooking brings about the cultural transformation of the raw, just as putrefaction is its natural transformation.” *Ibid.*, 142

knives, and grape scissors in the late-nineteenth century also helped socialize fruits by creating a new ritual around the food and distinguishing those who “ate” from those who “dined,” a higher form of eating that superseded the consumption of food for mere sustenance.<sup>457</sup> Americans performed many strategies in the kitchen to assimilate, or socialize, tropical fruit in American homes.

America’s largest banana distributor, the United Fruit Company, drew from this arsenal of strategies to naturalize bananas in American homes. In 1904, United Fruit published their first cookbook in partnership with the Boston Cooking School entitled, *A Short History of the Banana and a Few Recipes for Its Use*.<sup>458</sup> The booklet begins by summarizing the history of the United Fruit Company, which was born from a merger by the most influential banana barons in the United States: Andrew Preston, Lorenzo Baker Dow, and Minor Keith. Preston and Dow, founders of the Boston Fruit Company, decided in 1899 to consolidate their business with Keith, a prominent landowner and banana entrepreneur in Central America. The three industrialists capitalized on lenient extradition laws and new technologies in transportation at the turn of the century to build a transnational banana business. United Fruit promised in their cookbook to bring bananas “within easy access at all seasons to the housekeepers of the world.”<sup>459</sup> The company was clever to solicit their product to the world’s housekeepers since they were now in charge of purchasing food and preparing meals for many middle- and upper-class

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<sup>457</sup> Kathryn Grover, *Dining in America, 1850-1900* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 108; Kenneth Ames, 76-77.

<sup>458</sup> Janet McKenzie Hill, *A Short History of the Banana and a Few Recipes for Its Use*, Ed. by Boston Cooking School (Boston: United Fruit Company, 1904).

<sup>459</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

families at this time.<sup>460</sup> Cookbooks like *A Short History of the Banana* were surely helpful to the success of the United Fruit Company, which marketed bananas at a time when many consumers were still unfamiliar with the fruit.

United Fruit published their cookbook in partnership with Janet McKenzie Hill, an instructor for the Boston Cooking School. This partnership was certainly strategic since the School was known as an authority on food in the late-nineteenth century that would enhance the credibility of the United Fruit Company. Culinary reformer Fannie Farmer famously led the Boston Cooking School and helped professionalize women's work in the home by establishing cooking courses and nutrition laboratories for women to study the art of Domestic Science.<sup>461</sup> The stakes of mastering the Domestic Sciences were high since the creation of healthy meals and happy homes was thought to significantly reduce poverty, alcoholism, and the number of women criminals.<sup>462</sup> Knowing the social

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<sup>460</sup> This shift in labor from middle- and upper-class housewives to housekeepers was controversial according to authors like Thomas DeVoe who longed for the days when "it used to be that people shopped at public markets, particularly housewives who trusting only their judgment, picked out their meat and gave it to servants to carry, now this is but a relic of the past... We now find many heads of families who never visit the public markets, who are either supplied through the butcher or the dealers in our markets, or by their stewards or other servants, or by some that may be termed go-between-speculators, who buy things for families." Thomas deVoe, *The Market Assistant: Containing a Brief Description of Every Article of Human Food Sold in the Public Markets of the Cities of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Brooklyn* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1867), 21.

<sup>461</sup> Farmer was also known for creating standardized measurements and measuring tools in order to make cooking more uniform. Laura Shapiro discusses Farmer's revolutionary impact on American cooking in the book, *Perfection Salad: Women and Cooking at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986), 109-115.

<sup>462</sup> Nineteenth-century culinary reformer Maria Parloa believed that "dirty homes and improper food fill our prisons and almshouses with drunkards and criminals." Author of the *Successful Housekeeper* also warned that "...if [a woman] knows nothing of her kitchen, and is at the mercy of the cook, the table will soon become intolerable...the husband will soon fly from the Barmecide feast, and take refuge in his club, where he will not only find food that he can digest, but at the same time escape from the domestic discord that usually accompanies ill-cooked victuals at home." Catherine Beecher agreed that women's lack of cooking put families at risk, and that only with cooking can "our children become educated and so that our men don't complain and run off to taverns and clubs." Cooking healthy meals in the home thus translated

importance of food, the United Fruit Company hired Hill to help integrate bananas into American homes. Hill was an obvious choice since she had already written a piece on the banana for *The New England Kitchen Magazine* in 1894 and helped incorporate the Boston Cooking School into several other branding campaigns for products like Knox Gelatin and Baker's Brand Chocolate.<sup>463</sup> For the United Fruit Cookbook, Hill invented several banana recipes such as "Lamb Croquettes with Baked Bananas," "Escalloped Bananas," and "Richelieu Sauce"—all meals with noticeably French antecedents.<sup>464</sup> By inserting the banana into French delicacies, Hill obscured the banana's tropical origins and capitalized on America's reverence for French cooking to popularize the fruit.<sup>465</sup>

The United Fruit Company used illustrations as well in the 1904 cookbook to market bananas to American readers. (FIG. 107) The cover of this cookbook displayed the most obvious advertisement for United Fruit by showing a banana standing beneath the red, white, and blue crest of the United Fruit Company. The banana and logo are flanked by two women in classical costume who represent the banana tropics of Central and South America. By classicizing Central and South America and inserting them into the long tradition of depicting women as allegories for continents, this cookbook cover might have improved the reputation of the Tropics in American minds. The soft washes of color and gentle treatment of line further elevated the cultures of Central and South

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into the stability of the family and household. Shapiro, 128; Milton Ellsworth, *The Successful Housekeeper: A Manual Especially Adapted to American Housewives* (Harrisburg: 1884), vi; Catherine Ester Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *American Woman's Home: Or, Principles of Domestic Science* (New York: J.B. Ford, 1869), 467.

<sup>463</sup> "Bananas," *The New England Kitchen Magazine* I (Apr-Sept. 1894), 168.

<sup>464</sup> Hill, *A Short History of the Banana*, 18-19, 24.

<sup>465</sup> These recipes deviate from earlier cooking advice in the 1870s that encouraged Americans to create uniquely American meals rather than imitate the French and "act as the sheep of French pastures." James W. Parkinson, "American Dishes at the Centennial" (Philadelphia: King and Baird, 1874).



America and literally softened stereotypes about the Tropics. This illustration, however, also conformed to racial stereotypes fueled by climate theorists who claimed Southern societies were less dignified than Northern ones. The esteem for cultures north of the equator is visible in the depiction of Central America, who embodies the values of White, Euro-American culture in her light skin, regal dress, and intellectual pursuit of writing. South America, on the contrary, is a darker skinned woman in an exotic dress and hood with a less dignified facial expression characterized by heavy brow lines and flared nostrils. The allegory of South America also lacks a pen and page as if uninterested or incapable of intellectual exercise. Similar to images of California and Florida fruits that subscribed to theories about semi-tropical regions, this cookbook cover for the United Fruit Company negotiated climate theories by both elevating and denigrating the banana cultures of Central and South America.<sup>466</sup>

(FIG. 108) An illustration on the bookend of this cookbook yields further insight into the complex geographical network of the United Fruit Company. On a map displaying the Company's steamship activity, readers see heavy lines engraved in the directions of North and South, flaunting the robust banana trade between regions as far south as Costa Rica to ports as far north as Boston. Headlining this map is an image of a blonde mermaid riding atop a dolphin, with one hand on its fin and the other hand and

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<sup>466</sup> Ideas about race on this cookbook cover might also signal the complex attitudes about race on banana plantations. Peter Chapman discusses racism on Costa Rican banana plantations in the twentieth century, explaining that Chinese immigrants were considered racially inferior to most workers and treated the most poorly. African Americans were also denigrated on plantations in contrast to Italian workers who were thought to be hard-working and of a higher breed. The British West Indian worker was in highest demand on the banana grove. Skin color, as a result, directly related to the treatment of banana workers. Chapman, 76. Darió Euraque talks about race on Honduran plantations as well in "The Threat of Blackness to the Mestizo Nation: Race and Ethnicity in the Honduran Banana Economy," *Banana Wars: Power, Production, and History in the Americas* Ed. by Steve Striffler and Mark Moberg (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 229-253.

index finger pointing towards the horizon. The outstretched finger or hand was a prominent feature in American art of westward expansion that artists drew on settlers in pictures of the American West to symbolize the nation's ordained conquest of the American landscape. (FIG. 109) Emmanuel Leutze's *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way* is one of the most famous examples that shows a pioneer extending his hand westward towards the San Francisco Bay as a sign of America's divine right to conquer land west of the Mississippi River.<sup>467</sup> In the same way that the pioneer points towards the western frontier, the mermaid in the United Fruit cookbook points towards the tropical frontier. Placing this image over a map displaying company trade routes across the Atlantic was a clear endorsement of United Fruit's broader mission to incorporate the land of Central and South America for its mineral wealth and abundant natural resources. The company would have also wanted to claim Latin-American territory for its strategic geographic position along the busiest trade routes in the Atlantic Ocean. This expansionist agenda inspired the company's nickname, "el pulpo," the Spanish word for octopus, which critics used to condemn United Fruit for having tentacles in all aspects of Latin-American political life.<sup>468</sup> Artists and critics employed the visual language of expansion to illustrate the imperial goals of the United Fruit Company.

The history of the United Fruit Company warrants deeper investigation since it was one of the largest banana corporations in North America. With a stranglehold over the banana industry for the first half of the twentieth century, the United Fruit Company

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<sup>467</sup> Another famous example includes William Ranney's *Daniel Boone's First View of Kentucky* from 1849. John Gast's painting *American Progress* from 1872 also resonates with the illustration in the United Fruit cookbook by showing a woman as an allegory of progress, hovering over the landscape in the direction of the American West.

<sup>468</sup> Chapman, 8.

was a powerful, corporate animal with a voracious appetite for land and power. By the 1920s and '30s, the United Fruit Company owned more than three million acres of land in Central America and the Caribbean that amounted to the size of Rhode Island and Delaware combined.<sup>469</sup> Historian Peter Chapman says United Fruit “became the unstarred state on the U.S. flag.”<sup>470</sup> The company understood that in order to secure land for large-scale, corporate-owned plantations, it needed to control the vast systems of transportation, communication, law, land, and labor in Latin America.<sup>471</sup> By manipulating all of these different arteries of government, the United Fruit Company would exert profound influence over the politics of Central America and the Caribbean. United Fruit was ruthless in fulfilling this mission, acquiring land through “bribery, interpersonal cajoling, direct threat, manipulation of data, physical violence, or more impersonal economic institutional might,” according to Philippe Bourgois.<sup>472</sup> In performing all of these political acrobatics to benefit the company, United Fruit amassed profound control over the countries that produced its bananas.

No project more clearly demonstrates the imperial interests of the United Fruit Company than its line of steamships named “the Great White Fleet.” By 1930, the Great White Fleet included 100 industrial steamships that drove faster and carried more cargo than the sail-driven schooners of the nineteenth century. The United Fruit Company realized that this line of steamships would not only profit from carrying fruit to the

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<sup>469</sup> Ibid., 100. The company employed a roster of nearly 90,000 workers.

<sup>470</sup> Ibid.

<sup>471</sup> Mark Moberg and Steve Striffler, *Banana Wars: Power, Production, and History in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 10.

<sup>472</sup> Philippe Bourgois, “One Hundred Years of United Fruit Company Letters,” *Banana Wars: Power, Production, and History in the Americas* Ed. by Steve Striffler and Mark Moberg (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003): 104. The United Fruit Company perpetually “enlisted national and colonial authorities to secure company interests over local constituents.” Bourgois, 150.

Tropics but also passengers. The company began offering two- to three-week cruises for tourists on the Great White Fleet.<sup>473</sup> These cruises were so popular that the company eventually expanded and purchased two hotels on the island of Jamaica.<sup>474</sup> Tourist ventures were a natural outgrowth of the United Fruit Company since bananas also contributed to tourist fantasies of a tropical paradise. (FIG. 110) The Great White Fleet also offered tourists “The Conquerors of the Caribbean Tour” that shuttled passengers to historic sites conquered by European explorers. Tours surveying European exploration in the New World celebrated the “discovery” of the Caribbean and the mission to “rescue” and “civilize” the darker people of the Tropics. This mission resonated with the broader objective of the United Fruit Company, which claimed to raise the standard of living in the Caribbean and Central America by modernizing rural towns with railroads and electricity and building stores, hospitals, and harbors. For a white-American company that supported colonization and modernization of the “darker” Tropics, there was no better name for its cruise line than “The Great White Fleet.”<sup>475</sup>

The United Fruit Company’s drive to profit from the Tropics extended far beyond its cruise lines. The Company inserted itself over and over again in Latin-American and Caribbean politics to secure their economic interest in the banana trade. One of the most unsettling examples of their political interference was the 1954 coup to overthrow Guatemala’s president. In 1951, Jacobo Arbenz was elected president of Guatemala, adding a big wrinkle to the economic agenda of the United Fruit Company. President Arbenz intended to reduce economic inequality by implementing agrarian reform that

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<sup>473</sup> Prices for these cruises ranged from \$240 to \$350.

<sup>474</sup> Krista Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography, and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 49.

<sup>475</sup> Saul Zalesch, the collector of this print for the Great White Fleet, alludes to the idea of racial supremacy in relation to this cruise-line on his website, [EphemeraStudies.org](http://EphemeraStudies.org).

would distribute large unused land holdings from the United Fruit Company to rural peasants.<sup>476</sup> The passing of this policy put millions of dollars and thousands of acres of land at stake for the United Fruit Company. Not surprisingly, the Guatemalan president faced strong opposition from the United Fruit Company and their supporters in the upper-class and military ranks of Guatemala.<sup>477</sup> To prevent the passing of agrarian reform, the CIA intervened in the Arbenz government and used tactics of bribery and violence to overthrow the president's rule in 1954. The CIA also endorsed thousands of deaths and disappearances against anyone deemed "politically dangerous." These disappearances were performed by off-duty, ex-military men known as the "White Hand," which strikes an eerie resemblance with the United Fruit's "White Fleet."<sup>478</sup> The CIA garnered support for their cause by claiming that there was a threatening Communist sentiment brewing in Guatemala that needed to be squashed.<sup>479</sup> These imaginary threats concealed the real motivation for the Arbenz coup, which was to protect U.S. economic interest in the banana republics of Central America.<sup>480</sup>

It is disturbing to think that the CIA toppled an entire government for the sake of bananas. The collusion between American politicians and banana capitalists is evident in the fact that New York Senator John Foster Dulles served as the legal adviser to the United Fruit Company, while his brother, Allen Dulles, led the CIA and coup to

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<sup>476</sup> Mark Moberg and Steve Striffler, 12. This land was unused but part of the reserve stock of the United Fruit Company. Chapman, 124.

<sup>477</sup> United Fruit felt they were being cheated out of 19 million dollars of land. Chapman, 134.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>479</sup> The CIA even produced a 12-minute film called, *Why the Kremlin Hates Bananas*. Chapman, 149; Koeppel, 128.

<sup>480</sup> Since the beginning of the banana trade in Guatemala, American businessmen used corrupt tactics to profit from the banana business. Minor Keith negotiated an unfair deal through the corruption of key government officials in Guatemala then enabled him to build railroads in Guatemala without having to pay foreign and local taxes. Wiley, 9.

overthrow the Arbenz government.<sup>481</sup> The United Fruit Company used all the political muscle it could in America to protect the economic health of their business. The results of this coup, and similar events that transpired earlier in the century in Honduras in 1911 and Columbia in 1928, would have a lasting impact on the relationship between United States and Latin America.<sup>482</sup> The Company's political interference also extended to Belize and the Caribbean islands of Jamaica and Cuba, producing distinct political consequences throughout these different regions.<sup>483</sup> Chapman argues that United Fruit "possibly launched more exercises in 'regime change' on the banana's behalf than had ever been carried out in the name of oil."<sup>484</sup> Bananas, therefore, were a dangerous fruit in the twentieth century that inspired political wars over the cultivation of land and power in the Tropics.

### **Rotten Empire: The Aftermath of the Banana Wars in Contemporary Art**

Because the United Fruit Company influenced such a long and violent stretch in Guatemala's history, it has been the impetus for many artworks today. The artist to most famously address this subject is Moisés Barrios, who investigates the role of the banana in Guatemalan history in painting, lithography, and installation art.<sup>485</sup> This is a personal

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<sup>481</sup> Chapman, xiii.

<sup>482</sup> This, in the end, reversed President Franklin Roosevelt's good neighbor policy set to encourage closer economic and cultural ties between North America and Latin America. Chapman, 110.

<sup>483</sup> It is important to note that the diversity of coups across Central America and the Caribbean cannot be conflated together. Banana business by the hand of the United Fruit affected each country differently.

<sup>484</sup> Chapman, 7.

<sup>485</sup> Barrios studied painting and printmaking at the National School of Fine Arts in Guatemala, the University of Costa Rica, and the School of San Fernando in Madrid, Spain. In Guatemala, Barrios founded La Galería Imaginaria in La Antigua and was a member of the Grupo Presencia Imaginaria. For more information on Barrios' oeuvre, consult a Master's Thesis from the Department of Art and Design at Raphael Landívar University by Kristel Sabrina López Ruíz

subject for the artist who was just eight years old when the United States overthrew the presidency of Jacobo Arbenz.<sup>486</sup> (FIG. 111) Barrios addresses this subject in the painting, *Banana Toys*, which shows six toy soldiers defending a cluster of large-scale bananas. The soldiers pivot around the banana's fingers, raising their firearms and fists in all directions to fiercely defend the bananas they have occupied. The painting's dramatic perspective that descends down a steep diagonal slope creates an unsteady feeling for the viewer who cannot detect the location of the enemy. While Barrios could have depicted a more naturalistic rendering of the banana wars with pictures of soldiers on actual battlefields, his use of toys, bright colors, and exaggerated scale points to the absurdity that so many human lives could be destroyed over such a bright and cheery fruit.<sup>487</sup> Barrios' painting reminds viewers that bananas are akin to sugar, petroleum, and other raw resources that have been a battleground throughout history for power and economic capital.

(FIG. 112) Barrios continued to address the social politics of fruit in a series of paintings entitled *Ropa Americana* for his larger project, *Bananarama*, an exhibition at the Galeria El Túnel in Guatemala City. This series of paintings are devoted to images of Banana Republic clothing stores, which Mel and Patricia Ziegler founded in 1978. Originally featuring khaki materials and tropical prints, the Banana Republic brand was inspired by fantasies of banana groves and archaeological digs. Barrios' paintings,

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entitled, "A Study of the Use of Rhetorical Figures in the Development of a Visual Language in the Work *Bananarama* and *Contaminations* of Moisés Barrios" (July 2014).

<sup>486</sup> Although Barrios was located far from the capitol of Guatemala where the coup caused the most profound effects, he does recall his father and friends discussing the political state of the country as well as the liberaciónistas who hung propaganda posters in his father's shop that Barrios admired.

<sup>487</sup> The immense scale of the bananas in this painting might also reflect the immense importance of this fruit to United States and Latin-American politics.

however, focus on the store's display windows that show mannequins wearing crisp shirts and clean slacks. By tightly cropping his images and severing the mannequins' heads from the picture plane, Barrios draws attention to the models' stiff posture and lifeless arms that hang mechanically by their sides. The blurred boundaries between the interior and exterior of the store make it difficult to determine which model is real or fake. It is especially difficult to discern who is human and who is a mannequin since the people strolling outside the clothing store wear similar outfits and postures as the plastic models inside. (FIG. 113) One painting that shows a table of bananas for sale in the reflection of a store window is particularly disorienting by juxtaposing the sale of bananas for physical consumption against the sale of bananas for material consumption.<sup>488</sup> This painting essentially muddles the banana's function as both an object one eats and a concept one wears. The games of deception in Barrios' artworks forces viewers to question what the Banana Republic clothing brand truly represents.<sup>489</sup>

Through his paintings, Barrios exposes how the Banana Republic clothing brand finds inspiration and style in an economic system that is so corrupt and destructive. The formation of banana republics, after all, has caused environmental devastation through the clearing of land, laying of railroad tracks, and cultivation of plants in dense jungles. This inevitably caused deforestation and severe soil erosion that damaged waterways by silting up rivers and contaminating water with pesticides.<sup>490</sup> The industrialization of the

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<sup>488</sup> Barrios says this project was inspired by a photograph his friend took of a Banana Republic clothing store in New York City. Ruíz, 50.

<sup>489</sup> Eventually, the Banana Republic clothing company was sold to clothing magnet, The Gap, which shifted the brand to a more corporate look. It is fitting then that Barrios painted a Gap advertisement reflected in the window of a Banana Republic clothing store in one of his paintings.

<sup>490</sup> Laura Reynolds, "The Global Banana Trade," *Banana Wars: Power, Production, and History in the Americas* Ed. by Steve Striffler and Mark Moberg (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003),



landscape, furthermore, inspired a number of viruses that infected thousands of banana farms and diseases wiping out countless banana workers.<sup>491</sup> In addition to this environmental damage, banana republics have forcibly removed farmers off their land and supported inhumane working conditions for farmers on corporate plantations. Another devastating consequence of banana republic regimes is their dependency on importing limited resources and redirecting national products away from local production. Given the social, economic, and environmental wreckage caused by banana republics, it is strange that a clothing company would want to appropriate this troubling history for its brand. (FIG. 114) Barrios' painting of a white-skinned mannequin posing in front of a dark-skinned model in a Banana Republic advertisement reinforces the company's romanticization of banana republics in the "darker" continents without acknowledging the people and natural life that suffered at the helm of the banana trade.<sup>492</sup>

Barrios applied a more abstract approach to the sordid history of bananas in his series, *Contaminaciones*. (FIG. 115) For this mixed-media work, the artist covered chairs, strollers, clocks, and clothing in colorful banana prints. Although Barrios transforms these objects into a cheery shade of yellow, the saturation of brown banana

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34. But if any good came from the clearing of land it was the discovery of Mayan and Incan ruins found by employees of the United Fruit Company. In 1912, the company uncovered the Mayan Ruins in Quiriguá in Eastern Guatemala and also restored an ancient Mayan ball court. Chapman, 79, 118.

<sup>491</sup> Panama disease, which is highly infectious and soil-born, was particularly prevalent on farms in the Caribbean, which shifted the banana industry to Guatemala and others less affected regions. Panama disease required new soil, irrigation, and propping systems to boost banana yields. This often resulted in abandoned lands and people without jobs. The Cavendish banana variety was originally immune to Panama disease, which is why it was chosen to replace the Gros Michele variety in the 1950s and '60s. But today, Panama disease is infecting the Cavendish banana and thereby endangering the fruit for future generations. Moburg and Striffler, 12-14; Soluri, 71, 75.

<sup>492</sup> Even the term "banana republic" is problematic. The phrase was coined by O'Henry (William Sydney Porter) in 1904 in his book *Cabbages and Kings* to describe developing countries where bananas flourished. Banana republics, Barrios explains, thereby associates banana-growing countries with political instability and failure.

spots on these pieces look more like blood stains than bruises. By staining banana spots on objects associated with the innocence of childhood and the comfort of home, Barrios transforms the banana into a metaphor for corruption. The notion that bananas contaminate everything they touch is a powerful metaphor for Guatemala, which was once viewed as an infectious virus whose Communist strain would contaminate other Latin-American countries and interfere with American business.<sup>493</sup> Barrios' images of banana spots spoiling objects of domestic bliss greatly deviates from nineteenth-century still lifes of bananas that pictured the fruit not as something *spoiled*, but as a *spoil* of conquest. (FIG. 116) The banana spots that Barrios placed on a 1950s advertisement for a Hoover vacuum cleaner is especially evocative of how bananas created—rather than cleaned up—a political mess. This spotted advertisement captures how Americans enjoyed domestic bliss at the expense of Guatemalans whose government was toppled to foster economic expansion in the United States.<sup>494</sup> These artworks challenge the narratives told in earlier still-life paintings and United Fruit cookbooks to demonstrate how the banana was a controversial fruit implicated in a violent history of political gain.

Compared to the aggressive politics of the United Fruit Company in the early half of the twentieth century, the Company has since become a “shadow of its former,

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<sup>493</sup> In an interview, Barrios explains how the United States called Guatemala a virus that could infect other small Central-American countries and interfere with American interests. His original words are: “En esa ocasión el departamento de staff de los Estados Unidos calificó a Guatemala como un país virus. Un país que podía contagiar a los otros países pequeños centro americanos y los podía contagiar en el sentido no tanto de ser comunistas sino de interferir los interés americanos en esos países.” Ruíz, 47.

<sup>494</sup> This series of altered advertisements was inspired by the artwork of American artist Robert Hamilton.

haughty self.”<sup>495</sup> While the United States government fiercely supported United Fruit in the 1950s, it later attacked the Company for violating antitrust legislation in the 1960s. This forced United Fruit to divest many of its landholdings, putting more control in the hands of local subsidiaries and independent growers.<sup>496</sup> The United Fruit Company also grew weaker as labor unions grew stronger in the mid-nineteenth century, pushing for local growers to be given more control. United Fruit’s intense focus on bananas and lack of diversification further disabled the company and made it less competitive throughout the twentieth century.<sup>497</sup> The 1960s thus marked the twilight of the United Fruit Company. Even though many scholars praise United Fruit for bringing towns, jobs, stores, railroads, harbors, and electricity to the places where they established plantations, scholars also acknowledge how this “rarely led to enlightened labor relations or democratic forms of governance.”<sup>498</sup> Today, the reign of “el pulpo” is over, but the effects of its operations are still felt in the countries where they set down banana groves.

Like Moisés Barrios, Miguel Luciano is a contemporary artist who questions the material worth of fruit in his artwork.<sup>499</sup> (FIG. 117) In the same year that Barrios completed his *Bananarama* series, Luciano created *Pure Plantainum*, taking an actual plantain and plating it in platinum: the same costly material used to plate best-selling, record-breaking musical albums. This musical connection is fitting since Luciano’s

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<sup>495</sup> Allen Wells, “Conclusions: Dialectical Bananas,” *Banana Wars: Power, Production, and History in the Americas* Ed. by Steve Striffler and Mark Moberg (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 319.

<sup>496</sup> Ibid., 329.

<sup>497</sup> Chapman, 153.

<sup>498</sup> Moberg and Striffler, 4.

<sup>499</sup> Miguel Luciano was born in Puerto Rico, later moving to Florida where he received his B.A. and M.F.A. from the University of Florida. His work has been exhibited nationally and internationally and is featured in the permanent collections of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Brooklyn Museum, el Museo del Barrio, and el Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico.

silver plantain conjures the likeness of a flute with a tinny ring. By plating the plantain in such a precious metal, Luciano elevates the status of the plantain to an expensive object. (FIG. 118) Luciano specifically conceptualizes this fruit as a piece of jewelry by photographing a young boy wearing the platinum-embossed fruit on a chained necklace, cocking his head to the side and pushing the necklace forward with his thumb in a gesture that flaunts his banana bling to the viewer. This posturing belongs to a broader tradition in Hip Hop culture in which rappers display their bling and gold chains to assert their material achievements. Given the role that jewelry plays in displaying one's wealth, it seems appropriate that Luciano applies this tradition to the plantain: a cousin of the banana which shares the fruit's violent history.<sup>500</sup> Wars have been fought over bananas, and governments have been toppled for the fruit, making the plantain a valuable object and a natural choice for coating in platinum.

A deeper analysis of Luciano's sculpture reveals how the material worth of the plantain is fleeting since the actual fruit has been rotting for years within its platinum shell. Despite its embalmment in metal and placement within a glass case, the fruit has inevitably decayed. Luciano's *Pure Plantainum* is then a compelling metaphor for the exploitation of natural resources that will eventually shrink due to their overuse by consumers. This misuse creates an unsustainable scenario for consumers that continue to flush through limited resources like the banana. The fact that bananas are reproductively challenged and vulnerable to diseases makes the fruit even more precious. The entire banana race, in fact, is at risk of extinction due to a new version of the Panama disease

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<sup>500</sup> Luciano's selection of the plantain, in place of the banana, for this artwork is meaningful. Future versions of this project will explore the historical significance of the plantain more deeply.

that exploits the banana's failure at reproducing and diversifying.<sup>501</sup> The coin-like skin of Luciano's plantain which divorces the fruit from its characteristic color, spots, and plush skin conceals this unsustainable trajectory and focuses solely on the fruit's monetary worth. The faculty of taste is also lost in this sculpture of the plantain, which would crack a viewer's teeth if they were to bite into the metallic fruit. Luciano's platinum-plated plantain complements other artistic conversations on the fruit by forcing viewers to question the costs of consuming the banana in both physical and material form.

(FIG. 119) Dominican artist Yuniór Chiqui Mendoza also contributed to this dialogue by creating the artwork, *Bananhattan*, a map of New York City's Manhattan in the shape of a yellow banana.<sup>502</sup> Mendoza specifically altered a map of the New York City metro system, which shows banana spots loosely situated around the city's subway lines. While the banana's conical shape spans the city's northern-most neighborhoods in Harlem to the southern-most tip of the Financial District, the fruit's brown spots plot the different neighborhoods where large groups of immigrants from the Dominican Republic have settled. A big red circle and arrow stating "we are here" points to the areas of Washington Heights and Spanish Harlem where New York Councilman and Dominican immigrant Ydanis Rodríguez exhibited Mendoza's work to inspire creativity in the community. In addition to spotlighting Washington Heights where many Dominican

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<sup>501</sup> Since the banana is reproductively challenged, scientists have cloned the fruit to keep reproducing the food for sale. Its cloning, however, makes it susceptible to diseases, for when one banana gets a virus, they all do. Several virus strains in the twenty-first century threaten the livelihood of the banana, including Panama disease. For a bleak look at the future of bananas, read: Dan Koeppel, "Yes, We Will Have No Bananas," *New York Times* (Jun. 18, 2008).

<sup>502</sup> Mendoza was born and educated in Santiago in the Dominican Republic. He studied painting at Bellas Artes and architecture at the Universidad Tecnológica de Santiago. Mendoza was a professor and director of Bellas Artes until 2006, when he moved to New York City. Previously, he was involved in the Art Students League of New York and the Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop. Mendoza has had six solo exhibitions, and has participated in numerous group shows in the Dominican Republic and internationally.

immigrants live today, Mendoza draws large brown spots in areas throughout lower Manhattan that also indicate a vibrant Dominican community. It is fitting that Mendoza likens the shape of Manhattan to a banana since this city has been one of the major ports for banana shipments since the nineteenth century. (FIG. 100) A nineteenth-century illustration in *Harper's Weekly* portraying the “landing” of bananas in Manhattan resonates with Mendoza’s map of *Bananhattan* that a century later shows the “landing” of immigrants from banana-growing countries in New York. Both images are a testament to the fluidity of people, foods, and cultures that continue to move back and forth between the shores of New York City. Mendoza’s print celebrates the mobility of immigrants from banana republics and how they have transformed cities like New York into a reincarnation of their homeland.<sup>503</sup>

Similar to Mendoza, Dominican artist Julio Valdez moved to New York City in the 1990s and created several artworks that incorporate the banana.<sup>504</sup> (FIG. 120) A portrait of his brother from 2005, for instance, depicts thousands of banana hands that form an outline of his brother’s face. While bananas of a pale yellow color comprise the background of this print, bananas of a more saturated color form the center of the portrait, giving dimension to his brother’s face and hair. Valdez’ print proves how the banana is a useful symbol for creating portraits since the fruit’s short, thick fingers resemble the

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<sup>503</sup> Mendoza is not the only artist to conceptualize the banana as a map. Barrios did as well in his painting *Banana Map* from 1999. It is noteworthy that artists have conceptualized bananas as maps. It speaks to the geographical quality of the banana and the fruit’s broader use in charting land and empire.

<sup>504</sup> Julio Evangelista Valdez González was born in Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. He studied at the National School of Fine Arts in Santo Domingo and then studied illustration at the Altos de Chavón School of Design in La Romana, Dominican Republic (in affiliation with the Parsons School of Design in New York). When he moved to New York, Valdez (like Mendoza) studied printmaking with Robert Blackburn and Kathy Caraccio. He has exhibited internationally in Panama, Puerto Rico, France, Cuba, and other countries.

vigorous brushstrokes of an Impressionistic painting. In constructing his brother's face entirely from bananas, the sitter's identity becomes consumed by the fruit. Valdez likely used the banana for this portrait since the fruit is an icon of Dominican identity and an essential food of everyday life that figures into national dishes such as bollitos de plátano y queso (plantains filled with cheese) and chapea (bean stew with plantains). If Valdez and his brother were raised on this traditional diet, then this portrait might also symbolize how the banana literally shaped the sitter's physical health and identity. Valdez' portrait demonstrates how the banana is an icon of Caribbean culture and how food, more broadly, is a marker of national identity.<sup>505</sup>

Although viewers can interpret Valdez' print as a celebration of banana culture, his portrait *Brother and Plátano* also confronts negative stereotypes about immigrants from banana republics. The word "plátano," after all, is a derogatory word to describe Dominican and Puerto Rican immigrants in the United States. In some contexts, the term specifically describes newly arrived Dominican and Puerto Rican immigrants in New York City.<sup>506</sup> The plantain likely took on this meaning because the fruit has long been associated with people from "the Tropical Zone," forming prejudices that portrayed Tropical people as backwards and primitive, surviving on a "lazy" diet of raw fruit. Bananas are not the only food used to degrade people of different cultural groups. "Beany" and "brownie" are derogatory terms that have been used to describe people of Mexican descent; "kraut" was a term used after World War II to describe people of German ancestry; and "crackers" today pejoratively describe White-Americans in the

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<sup>505</sup> I am grateful to Dr. Carmen Ramos at the Smithsonian American Art Museum for exposing me to the artworks of Luciano, Mendoza, and Valdez.

<sup>506</sup> The word "aplatana'o" also describes people who have been "Dominicanized," according to Urban Dictionary.

lower classes.<sup>507</sup> Food analogies are convenient for communicating prejudice because in a culture of “you are what you eat,” food is thought to produce and reflect a person’s most essential characteristics. By drowning his brother’s face in bananas, Valdez challenges the unfair reduction of an entire culture to a single food or history.<sup>508</sup> The racial dimension of the word “plátano” thus thickens the meaning of Valdez’ portrait.

(FIG. 121) Artist Moisés Barrios digs deeper into the banana stereotype in his painting, *Absolut Banana*. In this image of Disney characters riding on a carpet towards a handful of green bananas, Barrios points to the role of tropical fruit in American caricatures. The artist shows the banana in front of two cartoon characters that Walt Disney designed for Latin-American audiences: Panchito Pistoles, a gun-wielding, sombrero-wearing rooster and José Carioca, a cigar-smoking Brazilian parrot in a Panama hat. In the same way that these cartoons present an exaggerated and unflattering portrait of Latin-American people, bananas have also participated in caricatured images of Latin Americans. (FIG. 122) A clear example of the fruit’s role in stereotypes is the caricature of Chiquita banana that was modeled after Brazil’s Carmen Miranda by illustrator Dik Brown in 1944. Voiced in a thick Spanish accent by Patty Clayton, and dressed in flirtatious makeup and a red, sultry dress, Chiquita taught American audiences how to eat and cook the banana through song in television and radio commercials.<sup>509</sup> John Soluri argues that Chiquita was essential to Americanizing the tropical banana by

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<sup>507</sup> Coconut, apple, cheesehead, and oreo are other foods appropriated for derogatory terms.

<sup>508</sup> The racial history of the word “plátano” also brings new meaning to Mendoza’s *Bananhattan*, a map charting the areas where Dominican immigrants known derogatorily as “plátanos” have settled in New York. In directing attention to these stereotypes, Valdez and Mendoza question how bananas have shaped Caribbean identity.

<sup>509</sup> Soluri, 161. Much has been written about the history of the Chiquita cartoon. For more information, see scholarship by Dan Koeppel and John Soluri.



bringing “a nonthreatening form of tropical exoticism to North America.”<sup>510</sup> Although her batting eyelashes and catchy song seem so innocent, Chiquita brought to life deep-seated stereotypes that portrayed Latin Americans as a passionate, promiscuous, and fiery people. Barrios’ painting dredges up these prejudices by inserting the banana into a pantheon of other cartooned stereotypes that reveal the complicated cultural, visual, and political histories of the fruit. Because bananas are so intricately tied to the histories of race, identity, and power, artists today continue to examine the banana’s rich symbolism.

### **Conclusion**

It is remarkable how one fruit has brought so much conflict and turmoil to the political landscape of the Americas. Nineteenth-century paintings that showed bananas “landing” on Manhattan shores and in the hands of excited bootblacks do not anticipate the conditions of violence that would accompany the banana industry. Early images of the banana in North America also do not foreshadow the explosion of the banana trade that would quickly expand from single entrepreneurs carrying fruit on sail-driven schooners to banana companies transporting the fruit (and tourists) on large, industrial steamships. Image makers would eventually catch up to the speed of the banana business by creating a number of illustrations and advertisements in the twentieth century that marketed the banana to American audiences. Silverware, cookbooks, and advertisements all worked in partnership to assimilate both the fruit and land upon which it was grown into the American empire. Because representations of bananas have clung to ideas about empire and expansion for more than a century, the fruit and its representation provides generative ground for understanding how food contributes to international politics.

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<sup>510</sup> Ibid., 164.

Few events so powerfully demonstrate the close connection between fruit and politics like the Guatemalan coup of 1954. Organized by the CIA and politicians connected to the United Fruit Company, the American government overthrew the Guatemalan president to protect economic interests in this region. The violence sanctioned by the United Fruit Company left a long and soiled legacy that inspired a number of artists today to broach the subject in their artwork. While Moisés Barrios paints Banana Republic Clothing stores to challenge the glorification of banana plantations, his collection of everyday objects stained with banana spots highlights how the banana business has literally spoiled the Guatemalan landscape and brought rotten politics to the region. Miguel Luciano's sculpture of a platinum plantain focuses more closely on the material status of the banana, while Yuni K. Mendoza's map of Bananhattan examines the fruit's cultural history in New York City. Julio Valdez pushes this point further by creating haunting portraits of faces enveloped by bananas, which illustrates how stereotypes associated with banana republics obscure the identity of people born and raised in these regimes. The usefulness of the banana for contemporary artists demonstrates how the fruit continues to carry a charge in national debates over land and power. The image of the banana, in conclusion, is a cautionary tale that warns how something so sweet can produce such bitter consequences.

## Conclusion

(FIG. 123) In the spring of 2000, a dozen tomato workers marched through downtown Ft. Myers, Florida, carrying a nine-foot-tall paper mâché replica of the Statue of Liberty. Instead of hoisting a torch to the sky, Lady Liberty in this reincarnation raised a fist gripping a tomato, plucked from the basket of red fruit cradled in her other hand. The statue's skin, normally a metallic green, has been darkened to brown, and the writing on her base reads: "I, too, am American." Miami artist Kat Rodriguez created this sculpture in partnership with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) to protest the unfair wages and inhumane working conditions for Florida tomato farmers.<sup>511</sup> The Coalition's appropriation of the Statue of Liberty for their protest is significant. By darkening her skin and firmly planting a tomato in her hand, the CIW transformed this icon of liberty into an image of the disenfranchised tomato worker who lacks the freedoms celebrated by this nineteenth-century sculpture. The new inscription on her base draws attention to how immigrant tomato workers are not treated as citizens or given the same fundamental human rights as other Americans. Debates over the citizenship of fruit workers are nothing new. These conversations draw back to the nineteenth century when critics challenged the national status of Asian grape pickers, Black citrus farmers, and banana growers in the Tropics. Depictions of fruit in still-life paintings, magazine illustrations, cookbooks, and world's fair exhibits provided a platform for these debates in the same way that this sculpture provokes conversations about tomato workers today. The CIW's sculpture of the Statue of Liberty reflects how American politics continue to rely on visual images of food to stimulate public discourse.

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<sup>511</sup> The CIW is currently pleading for a penny more in wages from corporations such as Wendy's and Publix Grocery store. The 2014 film, *Food Chains*, explores the mission of the CIW and recent tomato boycotts against businesses like Taco Bell.

Fruit harnesses so much political meaning because its representation and cultivation triggers controversial issues regarding the appropriation of land and natural resources. The harvesting and representation of fruit also activates conversations about the treatment of those who grow, harvest, and consume fruit. Fruit, on the most essential level, presses upon the political direction of the country and the relationships it cultivates with fruit-growing frontiers and laborers at home and abroad. While scholars have demonstrated how agricultural crops like cotton and sugar have long influenced American politics and even wars, few scholars have recognized how fruit does so as well. *The Fruits of Empire* proves how the cultural wars written in the soil are also written in the spaces where fruit is cultivated and depicted. This point is illustrated in four fruit case studies on representations of grapes, oranges, watermelons, and bananas. While chapters on grape and orange still lifes from California and Florida reveal the ways in which fruit assisted national expansion and the colonization of America's fruitful frontiers, an analysis of watermelon imagery illustrates the racial stereotypes embedded in foods that elevated white over "colored" eaters. A chapter on bananas shows how illustrators, artists, and cookbook authors encouraged, or challenged, the imperial agenda of American fruit corporations in Central America and the Caribbean. By digging beneath the surface of still-life pictures, *The Fruits of Empire* reveals how still lifes of food are more than dining-room showpieces, but provocative portrayals that participated in the construction of national identity.

If representations of grapes, oranges, bananas, and watermelons are so meaningful to the construction of American empire, then what might the visual histories of tomatoes, pineapples, and other foods tell us? If the vineyard, orange grove, and watermelon patch

are also sites for the construction of American identity, what might scholars find if they turned their attention to the strawberry field or coffee grove? A consideration of food in American art will inevitably lead scholars to examine art in understudied areas of the country where food is produced, including Chicago—the biggest manufacturer of meat in the nineteenth century and the Chesapeake Bay—an important producer of seafood. More scholarly attention should also be directed towards cities in the South such as Mobile, Alabama and New Orleans, Louisiana, whose close proximity to the Caribbean and Latin America generated two of the most robust, trans-Atlantic food trades in the nineteenth century. Scholarship would benefit from a more rigorous analysis of food in the colonial period as well, when the exploration of “undiscovered” territories generated a pictorial exploration of “undiscovered” foods. An examination of food in more contemporary times would also reveal how artists use food to comment on discourses of nature, nationhood, and the body.<sup>512</sup> Scholars contemplating the faculty of taste in American art will further enhance scholarship on food by showing the interpretive possibilities in sensory representations of game and smoke and drink culture.<sup>513</sup> Lastly,

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<sup>512</sup> The following is a short list of contemporary artists who address food in their artwork: Felix Gonzalez Torres (*AIDS: Untitled* 1991), Bernie Miller (*Cornucopia*, 1994), Doug Hammett (*Frosting Installation*, 1991-1999), Liza Lou (*Kitchen*, 1991-1996), Janine Antoni (*Gnaw*, 1992), Chris Kraus (*Aliens and Anorexia*, 2000), the Critical Art Ensemble (*Free Range Grain*, 2004), Franco Mondini Ruiz (*Mojado 1-3*, 2006), Beth Lipman (*Laid Table*, 2009); Oscar Murillo (*Candy Factory*, 2014), and the Fallen Fruit Collective.

<sup>513</sup> Some of these scholars include Ross Barrett, Pamela Simpson, Barbara Zabel, and Guy Jordan. Ross Barrett, “Rioting Refigured: George Henry Hall and the Picturing of American Political Violence,” *Art Bulletin* 92.3 (September 2010), 211-231; Pamela Simpson, “Cereal Architecture: Late-Nineteenth-Century Grain Palaces and Crop Art,” *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 10 (2005), 269–82; Barbara Zabel, Stuart Davis’s Appropriation of Advertising: The Tobacco Series, 1921–1924,” *American Art* 5, no. 3 (Autumn 1991), 57–67; Guy Jordan, *The Aesthetics of Intoxication in American Art and Culture*. Dissertation. (College Park: University of Maryland, 2007). For a more complete list of scholars addressing the faculty of taste in American art, see Leo Mazow, “Sensing America,” *American Art* 24.3 (Fall 2010), 2-11 and Jenni Lauwrens, “Welcome to the Revolution: The Sensory Turn and Art History,” *Journal of Art Historiography* 7 (Dec. 2012), 1-17.

the study of women artists is critical to advancing art historical scholarship on food since it was one of the few subjects historically available for women to paint. These threads of research comprise some of the new directions in scholarship that will enrich the disciplines of Art History, Visual Culture, American Studies, Environmental History, and Food Studies.

The disciplines of Art History and Visual Culture offer a particularly unique framework for analyzing the subject of food because these fields recognize the agency of art and food and the ways they both reflect and reform society. These disciplines can account for the ways in which art of food has accompanied the most revolutionary moments throughout American history, including early American still-life paintings that joined fruits from different seasons, reflecting hothouse innovations that enabled people for the first time to widely cultivate foods outside their natural environment. Depictions of elaborate tea settings in the later Victorian period also marked historic changes in the dining room and the burgeoning industry of silverware and etiquette advice designed for this new domestic space. Artworks showcasing fruit in plastic wrapping escorted the nation into the twentieth century when advancements in packaging and transportation rapidly improved the exchange of goods across the country.<sup>514</sup> Depictions of restaurants after World War I reflected the continued momentum of industrialization as well as a shift in gender roles that led many men and, more importantly, women to patronize food institutions outside the domestic sphere. Pop artists depicted the results of this modernizing consumer culture in artworks of mass-produced foods that filled the aisles in

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<sup>514</sup> A solid overview of this topic can be found in Ellen Robert's chapter, "Anxious Consumption: Paintings of Food at the Turn of the Twentieth Century" in *Art and Appetite: American Painting, Culture, and Cuisine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

grocery stores.<sup>515</sup> Feminist art of the 1970s also addressed the mass-production of food and challenged women's roles with modernized food and appliances in the kitchen.<sup>516</sup> A number of artists in the late twentieth century embraced new technologies in the arena of food science to genetically engineer food, plants, and flowers for the gallery space. Their artwork falls in synch with the earliest still-life paintings produced in America that too combined art with advancements in science.<sup>517</sup> Methodologies from the disciplines of Art History and Material Culture have the capacity to show how art of food followed and led a number of the most historic cultural changes in American society. *The Fruits of Empire*, consequently, advocates for a deeper scholarly consideration of food in American art.

There is a clear need for more scholarly inquiry on this subject because artists did not thoughtlessly include food in their representations; they deliberately and carefully selected foods to produce meaning in imagery. What artists excluded from their portrayals of food is just as important and worthy of consideration. By analyzing the complex meanings that representations of food generate, scholars discover how food is a powerful conduit for understanding and transforming society. Attention to representations of food in the Sunbelt and broader Americas is especially reflective of food's significance to society and its capacity to spark conversations on race and nationhood along the borders of the country. Widening the scope of still-life studies to

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<sup>515</sup> See also "Convenience: Pop, Production, and the Marking of Art in the 1960s" in *Art and Appetite* (2014) and Susan Landauer, William H. Gerdts, and Patrician Trenton, *The Not-So-Still Life: A Century of California Painting and Sculpture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). Another artist who addresses this topic includes Richard Estes (*The Candy Store* 1969).

<sup>516</sup> A few of these artists include Eleanor Antin (*Carving: A Traditional Sculpture*, 1992), Adrian Piper (*Catalysis*, 1970), Martha Rosler (*Semiotics in the Kitchen*, 1975), and Judy Chicago (*Dinner Party*, 1974-1979).

<sup>517</sup> See George Gessert's article for a survey of Genetic Art.

the visual culture of the everyday in the form of cookbooks, crate labels, and silverware design also demonstrates the social importance of food and its role in shaping attitudes about the way food is cultivated and cooked. This research then not only expands the breadth of materials influencing still-life representations of food but also the pantheon of voices who harvested, prepared, and consumed the foods visible in artistic depictions. The recent swell of exhibitions on still-life representation, combined with the growing number of Food Studies programs across the country, speak to the timeliness of this project and the scholarly rewards to be reaped from analyzing food in American art. Only when we examine the edibles in still-life representations will we see how food feeds both bodies of art and empire.



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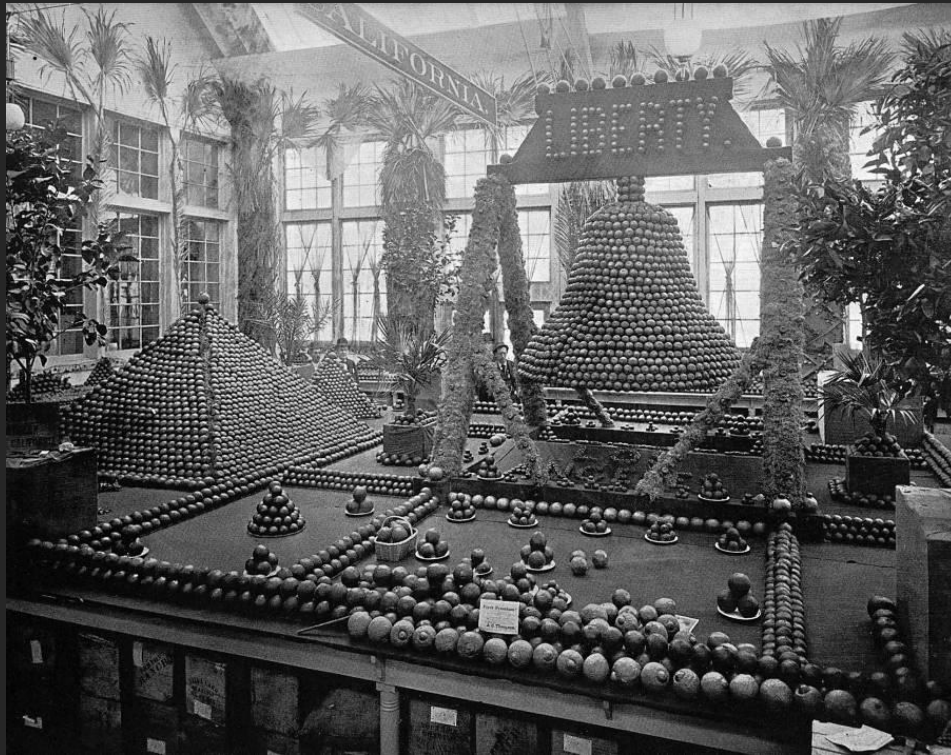
## CONCLUSION

Figure 123: Kat Rodriguez and the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, Statue of Liberty, 2000. Paper Mâché, Collection of the National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

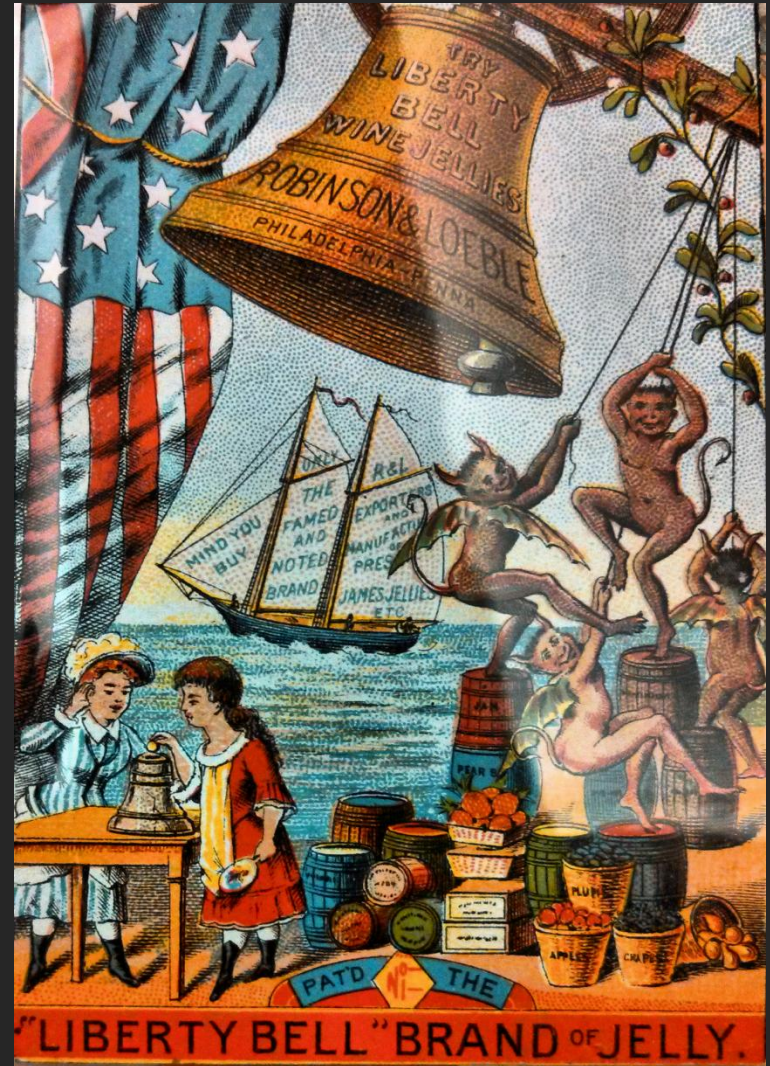




(FIG. 1) *Liberty Bell Made of Oranges*, California Horticultural Display at the Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893. Photo from *The Dream City: A Portfolio of Photographic Views of the World's Columbian Exposition* (N. D. Thompson Publishing Co., 1893): 231.

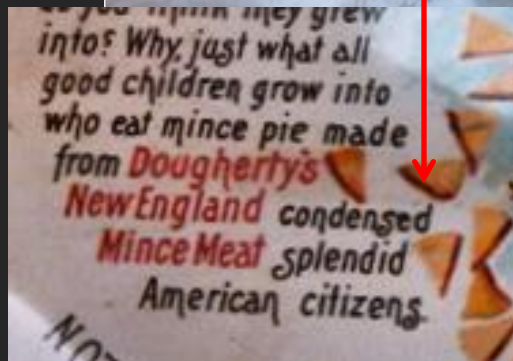


*Trade Card for Liberty Brand Jelly*, instructing children to make jelly molds from the shape of the Liberty Bell, Date Unknown. Jay T. Last Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, California





(FIG. 2) *Trade Card for New England Mince Meat*, Date Unknown. Jay T. Last Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, California





(FIG. 3) Kara Walker, *A Subtlety*, A Project for “Creative Time” at the Domino Sugar Factory, New York City, New York, 2014

(FIG. 4) Civil-War Envelope, 1861-1865.  
Collection of the American Antiquarian  
Society, Worcester, Massachusetts



Civil-War Envelope, 1861-1865.  
Collection of the American Antiquarian  
Society, Worcester, Massachusetts



(FIG. 5) Civil-War Envelope, 1861-1865. Collection of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts



(FIG. 6) Horace Greeley, "Greeley Prize for Grapes," *The American Farmer* (1866): 371.

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### **"GREELEY PRIZE" FOR GRAPES.**

THE Committee appointed by the Horticultural Association of the American Institute to award the prize of \$100, offered by the Hon. Horace Greeley, President of the Institute, for the best grape for general cultivation, reports, as follows:

*First*—That it is a matter of regret that the offer has not called out more competition from among the thousands of persons now usefully and profitably engaged in the production of this delicious fruit, of which there were but five varieties presented for our examination at the late session.

*Second*—One of the conditions of the offer was, that samples of the fruit be presented for examination by the committee, and therefore we were restricted to the consideration of such varieties as were brought before us.

*Third*—At a meeting of the Committee, held last year, a scale of points were adopted for our guidance in the decision on the grape. One of these points was the necessity of healthiness and hardiness of the vine and foliage, by which is meant its ability to withstand frost and mildew.

Excellence of the fruit itself is in our opinion a point of great merit, but of infinitely less consequence for the general planting community than healthfulness and vigor, hardiness and productiveness of the vine.

Fruit growers are generally convinced of the importance of selecting such varieties as will prove profitable, and everybody understands what is meant by a "good market fruit," although it often happens that such are quite inferior to other varieties in their respective classes.



(FIG. 7) Currier and Ives, *First Premium Grapes*, Post-1865. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



FIRST PREMIUM GRAPES.  
A. Pope. Sculp.



(FIG. 8) Andrew John Henry Way, *Bunch of Grapes*  
(*Prince Albert Grapes*), 1873. Oil on canvas, 29 x 24 in.,  
Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, Maryland



(FIG. 9) Maria K. Naylor, *The National Academy of Design Exhibition Record v.2* (New York: Kennedy Galleries, 1973).

*Naylor NAO - v. 2.*

WAY, Agnes C.	1878 Address: 78 Fourth Avenue, Pittsburgh. 564. Clouds and Sunshine. 100.00.
✓ WAY, Andrew John Henry (1826-1888)	1861 Address: Baltimore, Md. 550. Fruit. For sale.
	1872 Address: Baltimore, Md. 167. One, P. M. Alfred Bujac.
	1874 Address: Baltimore, Md. 7. Purity. For sale.
	1875 Address: Baltimore. 457. Still Life. For sale.
	1877 Address: 99 North Charles Street, Baltimore. 40. Ocean's Gems. 150.00. 179. Black Hamburg Grapes. 120.00. 181. Muscat Grapes. 120.00. 536. A Friar's Breakfast. 120.00.
	1878 Address: Baltimore, Maryland. 232. Calabrian Raisin Grapes. 250.00.
	1879 Address: Baltimore, Md. 9. White Grapes. E. P. C. Lewis. 34. Grapes-Gros Colmo de Canto. David T. Busby. 53. Black Grapes. E. P. C. Lewis.
	1880 Address: Baltimore, Md. 86. Flammé de Tokay grapes-California. 450.00.
	1881 Address: 99 N. Charles Street, Baltimore. 664. Pomona's Offering. 225.00.
	1882 Address: 99 North Charles Street, Baltimore. 584. Red Head Ducks. 250.00.
	1883 Address: 99 N. Charles Street, Baltimore. 216. Black Hamburg Grapes. 175.00. 220. Oysters and Ale. 125.00. 700. Cherries. 150.00.
	1884 Address: 99 North Charles Street, Baltimore. 573. Canvas Back Ducks. 125.00. 589. Gros Colmo Grapes. 150.00.
	1885 Address: 99 North Charles Street, Baltimore. 94. Under the Vines. 175.00.

— 599 —

(FIG. 10) *The Oldest Grapevine in the World, Hampton Court Palace, England, 1897.* Stereograph, Underwood and Underwood Co.



(FIG. 11) Currier and Ives, *Prize Black Hamburg Grapes*,  
Post-1865. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.





(FIG. 12) *Mammoth Grape Vine, Santa Barbara California, Philadelphia Centennial Agriculture Hall, 1876. Albumen printed on cardboard, 10 x 8 cm., Centennial Photographic Company Collection, Library Company of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*



(FIG. 13) Michael Sarver, *Mammoth Grapevine*, 1876.  
Albumen printed on cardboard, 10 x 8 cm. Centennial  
Photographic Company Collection, Library Company  
of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



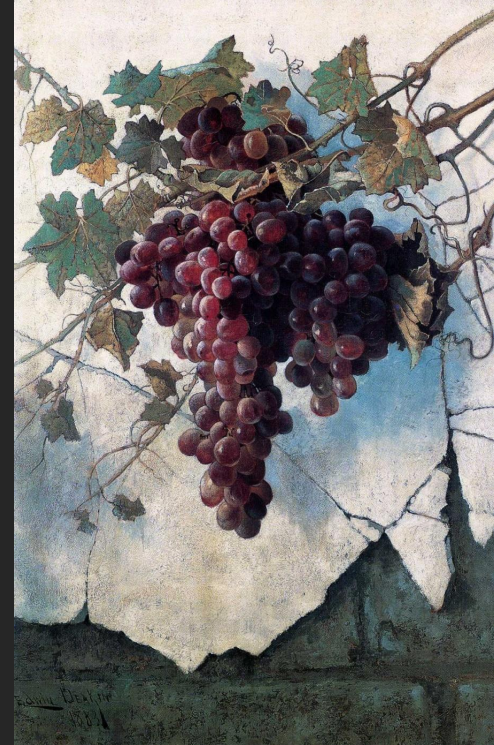
[Mammoth grape vine in Santa Barbara]





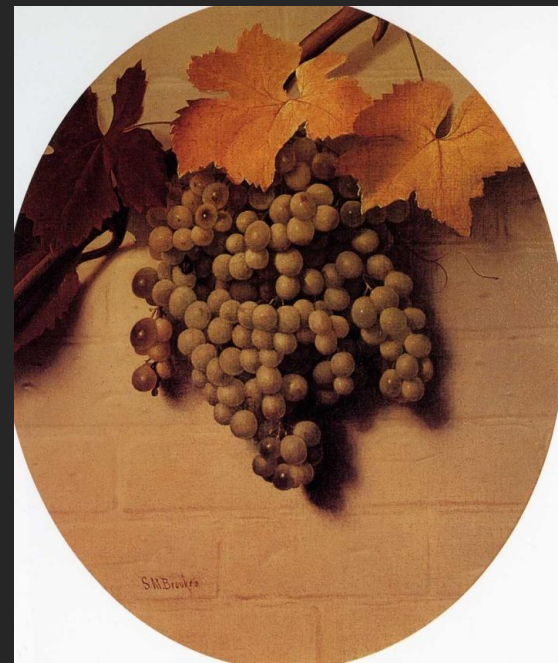
(FIG. 14) Samuel Marsden Brookes, *California Mission Grapes*, 1865. Oil on canvas mounted on board, 23 x 19 in., Garzoli Gallery, San Rafael, California

Edwin Deakin, *Grapes against a Mission Wall*, 1883. Oil on canvas, 24 x 16 in., Garzoli Gallery, San Rafael, California



Edwin Deakin, *Flame Tokay*, 1883. Oil on canvas, 24 x 16 in., William and Abigail Gerdt's Collection, New York City, New York

Samuel Marsden Brookes, *Muscat Grapes*, 1865. Oil on canvas mounted on board, 23 x 19 in., Garzoli Gallery, San Rafael, California





(FIG. 15) Samuel Marsden Brookes, *Still Life of Fruit and Champagne*, Before 1880. Oil on canvas, 28 x 22 in., Collection of Dr. Albert Shumate

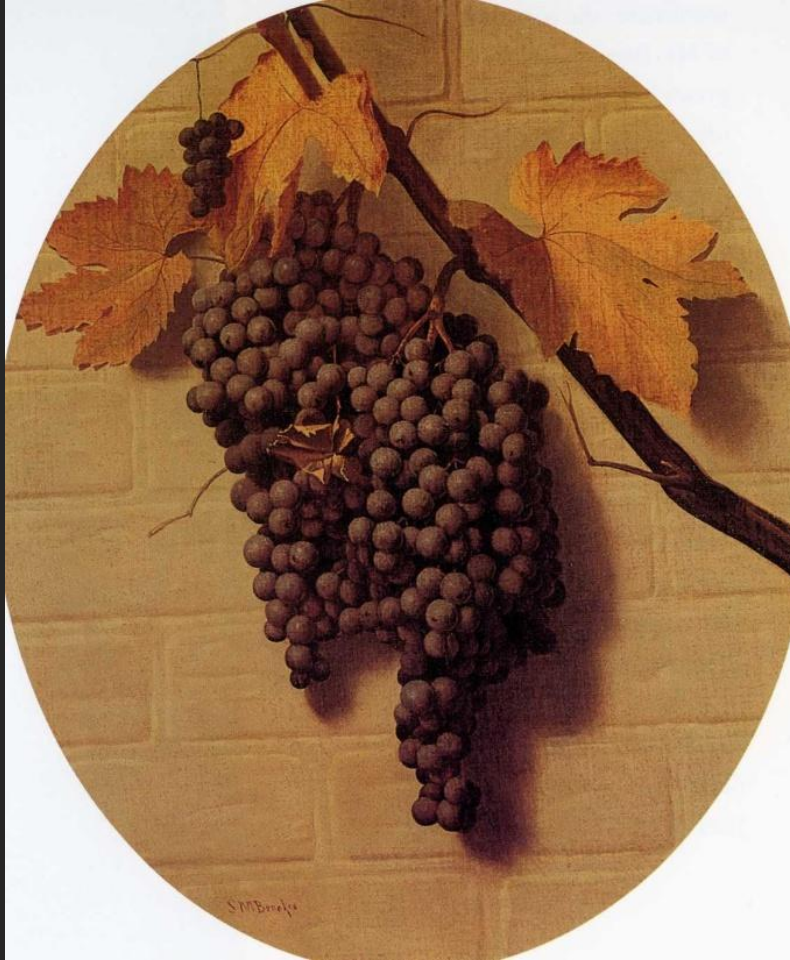


"Advertisement for Eclipse Champagne" *Daily Alta* v.32, 1880.

THE NICEST PRESENT  
FOR THE  
**HOLIDAYS!**  
A CASE OF  
ARPAD HARASZTHY & CO'S  
**ECLIPSE CHAMPAGNE**  
The only CALIFORNIA CHAMPAGNE made by  
the NATURAL PROCESS (FERMEN-  
TATION in the Bottle.)  
"EQUAL TO ANY IMPORTED"  
ARPAD HARASZTHY & CO.,  
Dealers in California Wines and Brandy,  
**530 Washington Street.**  
DOWRY-2pm



(FIG. 16) Samuel Marsden Brookes, *California Mission Grapes*, 1865. Oil on canvas mounted on board, 23 x 19 in., Garzoli Gallery, San Rafael, California



Edwin Deakin, *Grapes against a Mission Wall*, 1883. Oil on canvas, 24 x 16 in., Garzoli Gallery, San Rafael, California

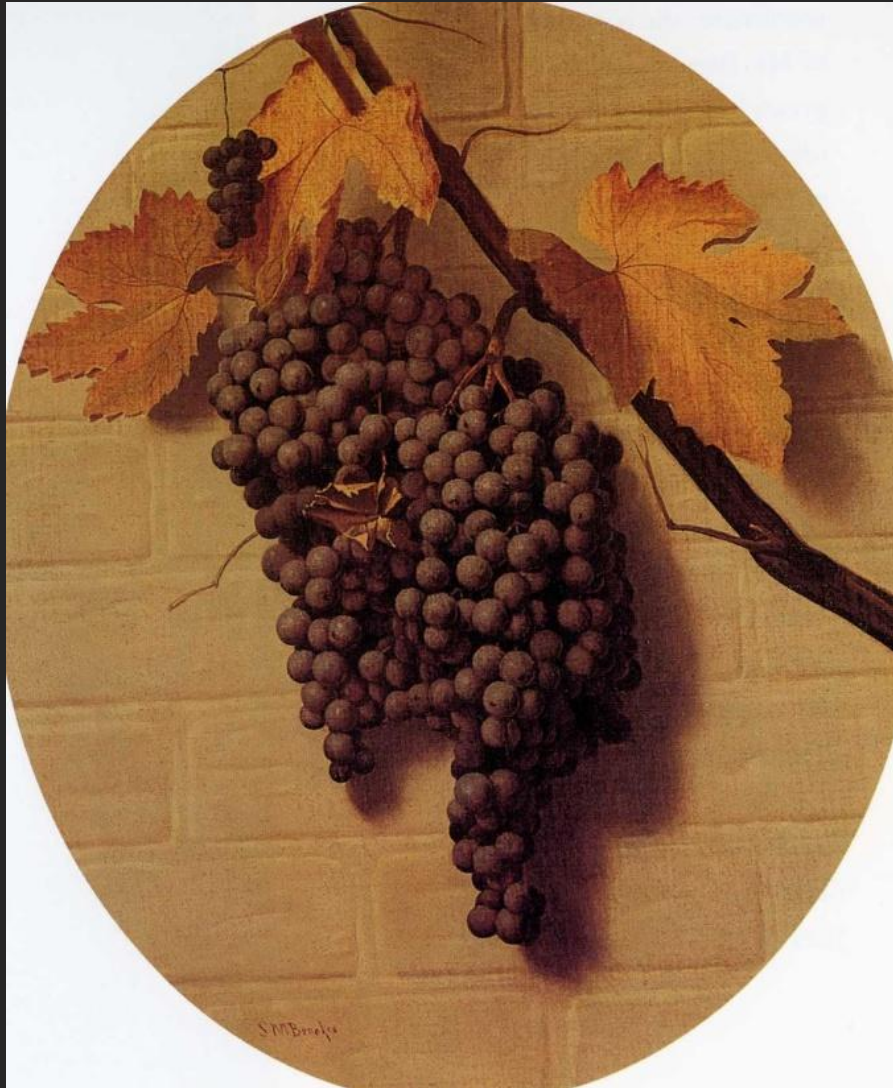




(FIG. 17) Edwin Deakin, *Grapes against a Mission Wall*, 1883. Oil on canvas, 24 x 16 in., Garzoli Gallery, San Rafael, California



(FIG. 18) Samuel Marsden Brookes, *California Mission Grapes*, 1865. Oil on canvas mounted on board, 23 x 19 in., Garzoli Gallery, San Rafael, California

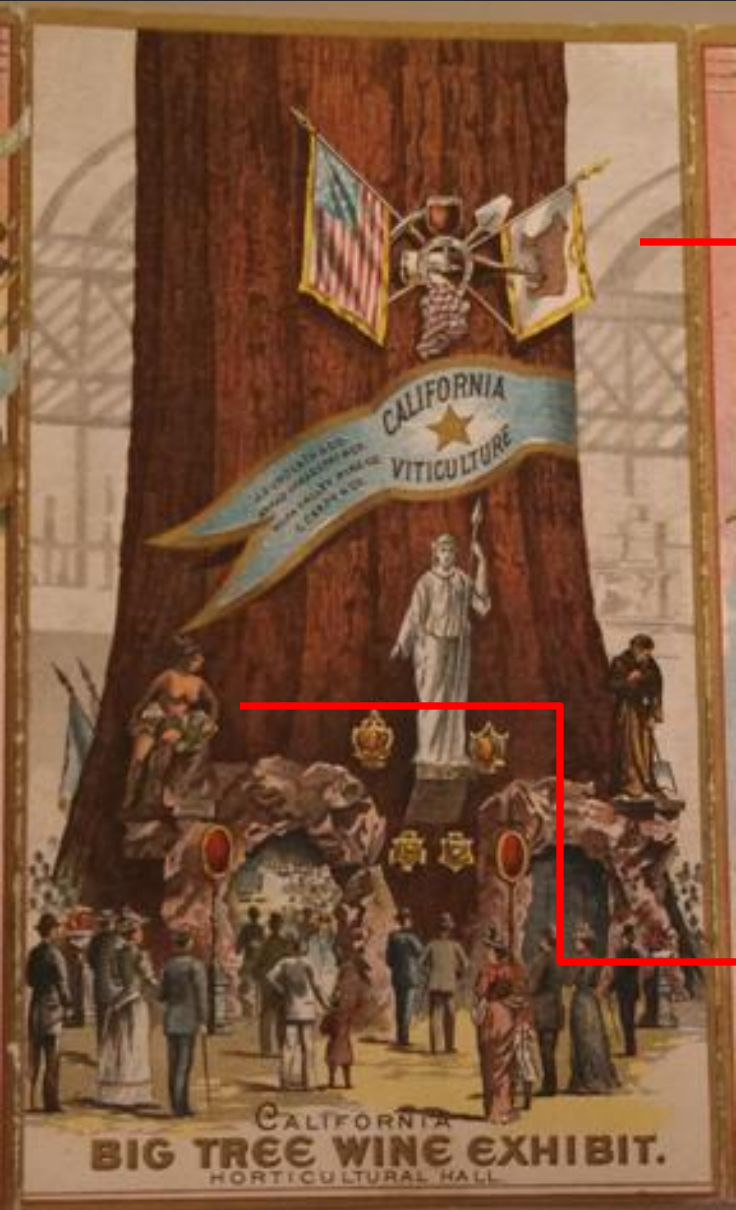




(FIG. 19) *California Big Tree Wine Exhibit*, Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893. Jay T. Last Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, California



(FIG. 20)





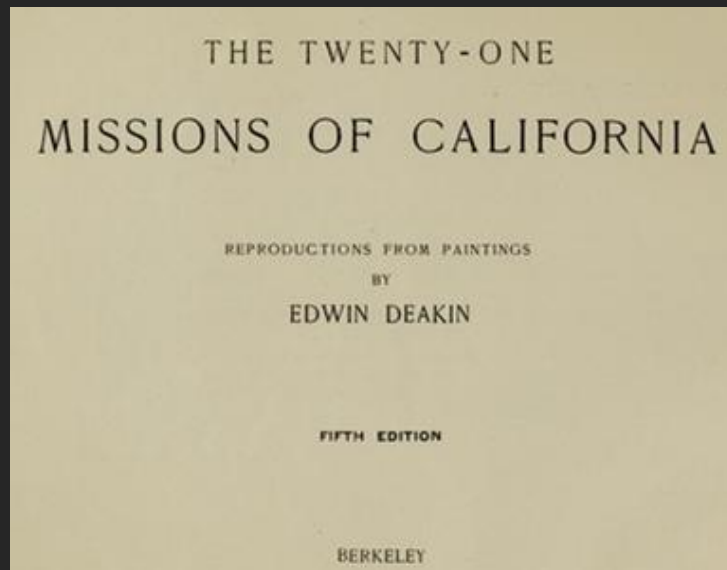
(FIG. 21) *California Big Tree Wine Exhibit*, Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893. Jay T. Last Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, California



(FIG. 22) Edwin Deakin, *Still Life with Grapes*,  
No Date. Oil on Canvas, 24 x 26 in., Bonhams  
Auction House, San Francisco, California



(FIG. 23) Edwin Deakin, *The Twenty-One Missions of California*, (Berkeley: Murdock Press, 1899)



Edwin Deakin, *Mission Santa Inés*, 1899. Oil on canvas, 25 x 30 in., Collection of the Santa Barbara Mission Archive-Library, Santa Barbara, California

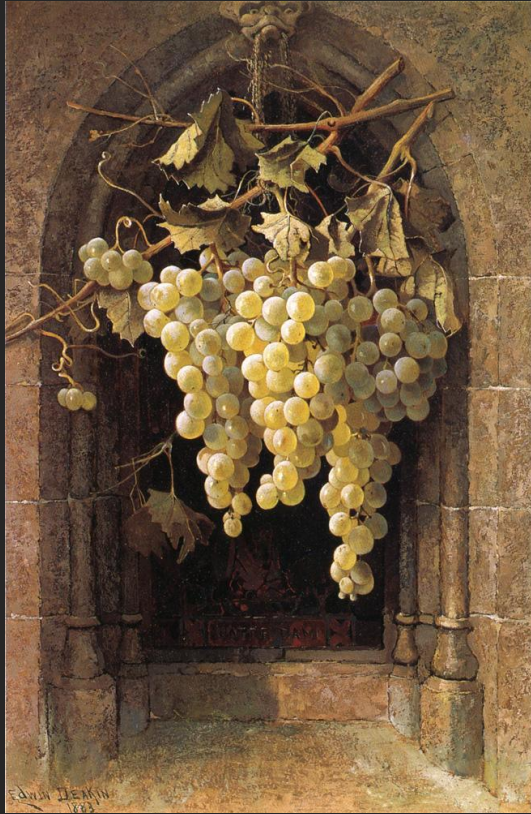




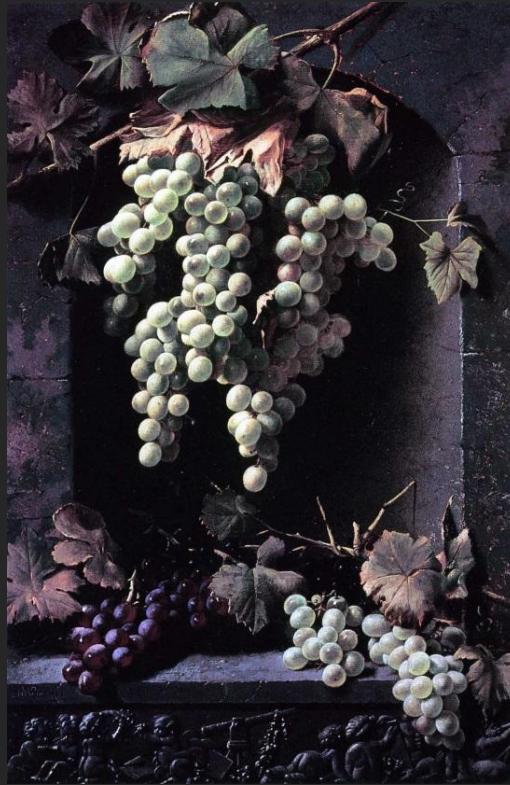
(FIG. 24) Edwin Deakin, *Still Life with Grapes*, 1888.  
Oil on Canvas, 24 x 16 in., Smithsonian American  
Art Museum on loan to the United States Supreme  
Court, Washington, D.C.



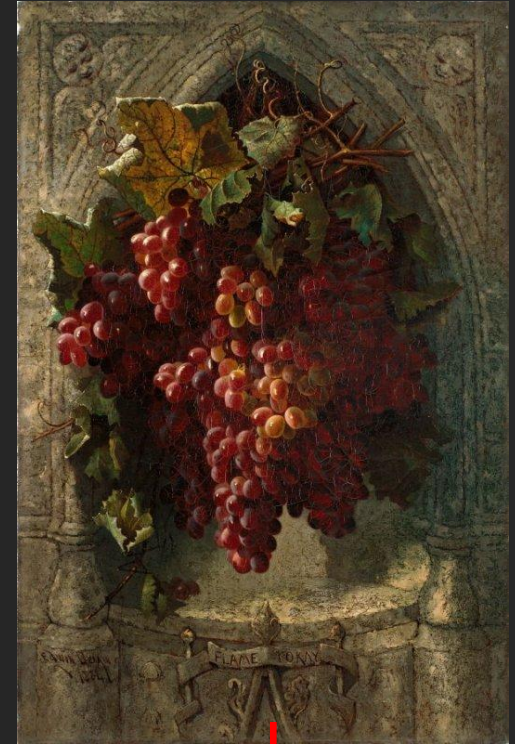
(FIG. 25) Edwin Deakin, *Grapes*, 1883. Oil on canvas, 24 x 16 in., Private Collection,



Samuel Marsden Brookes, *A Still Life with Grapes*, Date Unknown. Oil on Canvas, P24 x 16 in., Private Collection



Edwin Deakin, *Flame Tokay Grapes*, 1884. Oil on Canvas, 30 x 20 in. DeYoung Museum, San Francisco, California

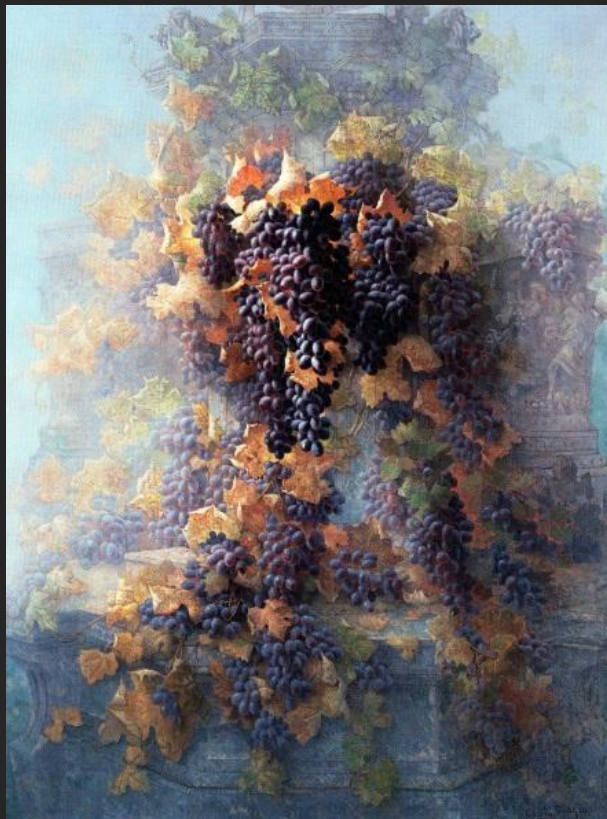




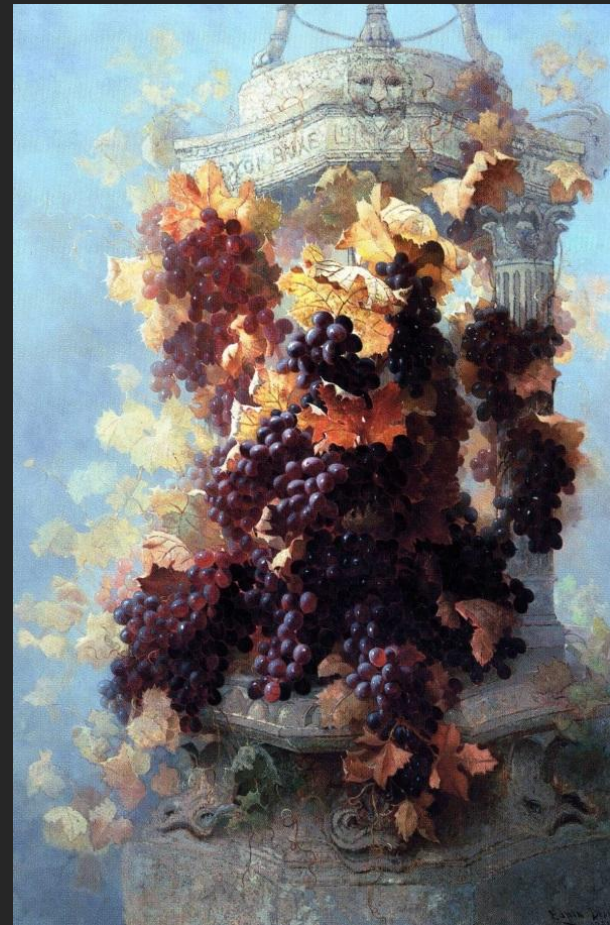
(FIG. 26) Edwin Deakin, *Grapes and Architecture*, 1896. Oil on Canvas, 42 1/8 x 28 1/8 in. Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, California



Edwin Deakin, *Grapes and Architecture*, 1907. Oil on Canvas, 42 1/8 x 32 in. Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, California



Edwin Deakin, *Grapes and Architecture*, 1908. Oil on Canvas, 48 1/4 x 36 1/4 in. Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, California



(FIG. 27) Edwin Deakin, *An Offering to Bacchus*, 1892. Oil on Canvas, 36 x 42 in. Oakland Museum of California, gift of Mrs. Leon Bocqueraz



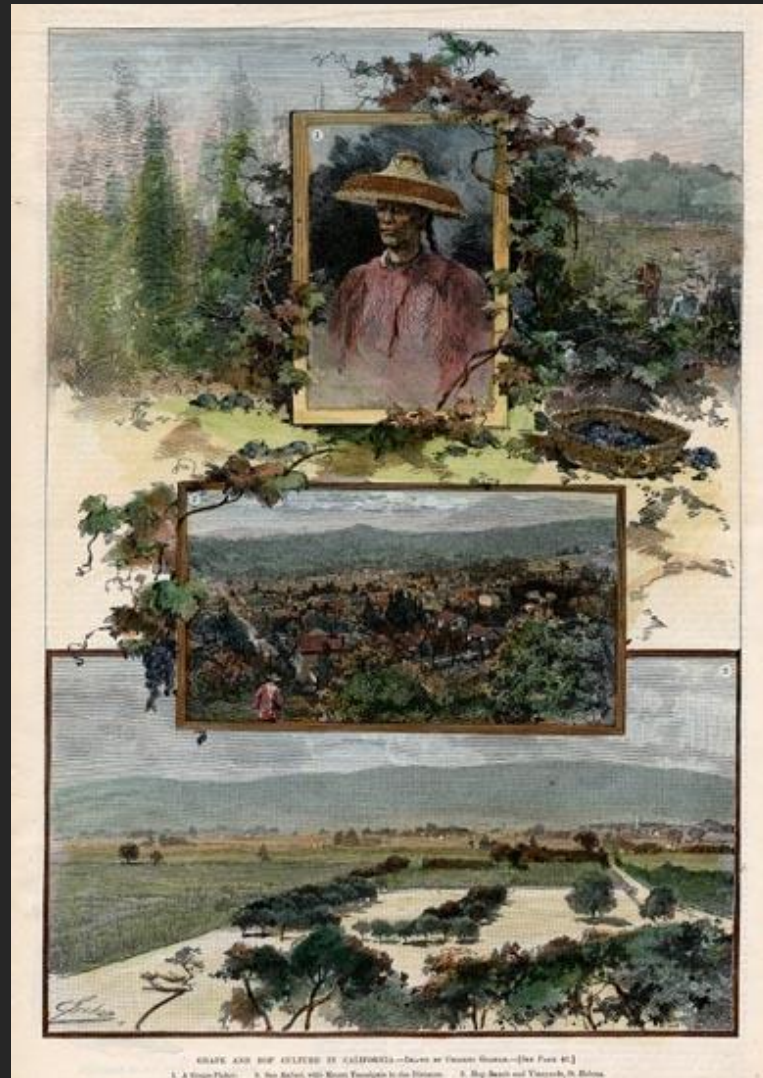


(FIG. 28) Paul Frenzeny, "The Vintage in California at Work in the Wine Pressers," *Harper's Weekly*, 1878. Print on Paper, hand-colored, 37 x 56 cm, p. 790.



THE VINTAGE IN CALIFORNIA—AT WORK AT THE WINE PRESSER.—DRAWN BY P. FRENZENY.—[SEE PAGE 101]

(FIG. 29) Charles Graham, "Grape Picker, San Raphael with Mount Tamalpais in the Distance, Hop Ranch and Vineyards, St. Helena," *Grape and Hop Culture in California*, *Harper's Weekly*, Jan. 21, 1888. Hand-colored wood engraving, 13 1/4 x 9 1/8 in.



(FIG. 30) Robert Spear Dunning, *Still Life*, Post-1864. Oil on Canvas Mounted on Panel, 19 7/8 x 24 in., Private Collection. Cited in John Briddle, William Gerdt, and Sally Secrist's *American Cornucopia: Nineteenth-Century Still Lives and Studies* (1976): 26.



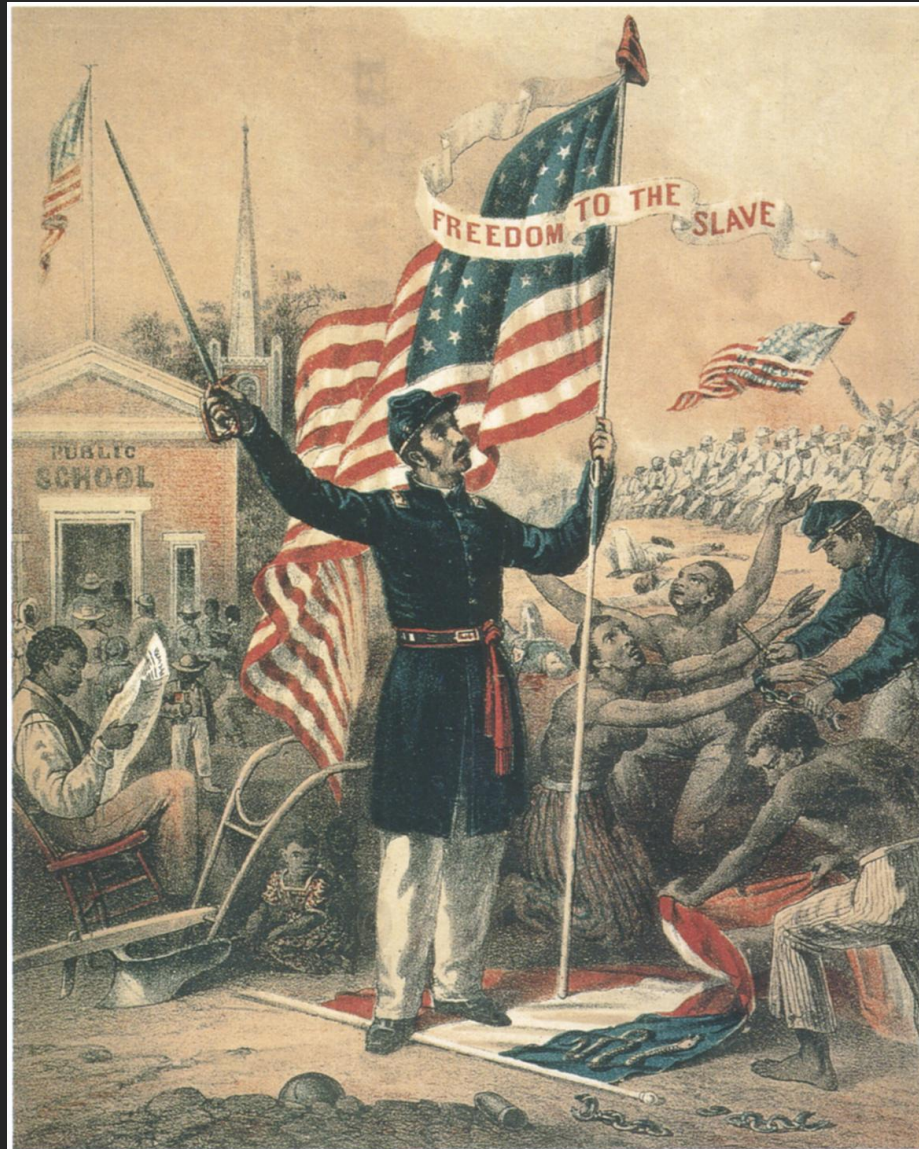


(FIG. 31) John Smith Tholey, *Reconstruction of the South*, 1867. Lithograph, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.





(FIG. 32) Currier and Ives, *Freedom to the Slaves*, 1863, Lithograph, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



(FIG. 33) James Wells Champney, *Entrance to Colonel Hart's Orange Grove, Opposite Palatka* in Edward King's "The Great South," *Scribner's Monthly*, 1875.





(FIG. 34) *Semi Tropical Florida* by the Bureau of Immigration (Chicago: Rand, McNally and Co. 1881).



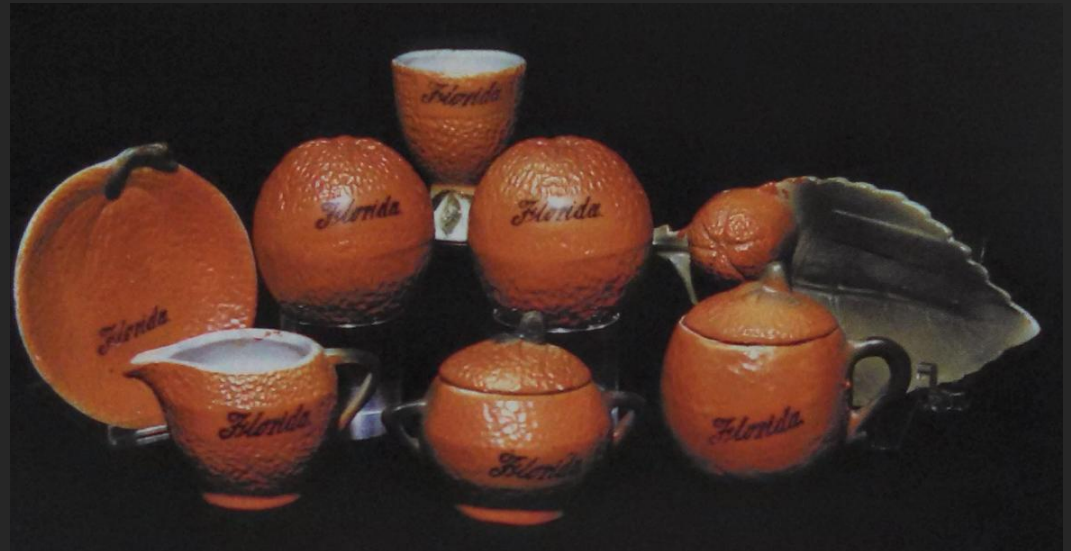
George Barbour, *Florida for Tourists, Invalids and Settlers* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1884) based on James Wells Champney's illustration of *Colonel Hart's Orange Grove*, 1873, Pencil and Watercolor.





(FIG. 35) *Orangeware Cup, Creamer, with Applied Orange Blossoms and Leaves Stenciled in Gold*, pictured in Larry Roberts' *Florida's Golden Age of Souvenirs: 1890-1930* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001): 27.

*Orangeware Souvenirs, Eggcup, Pintrays, Creamer and Two Miniature Sugars*, pictured in Larry Roberts' *Florida's Golden Age of Souvenirs: 1890-1930* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001): 28.





(FIG. 36) *Enameled Bowl Spoons, Marked "Daytona" "Tampa," "Jacksonville" and "St. Petersburg,"* pictured in Larry Roberts' *Florida's Golden Age of Souvenirs: 1890-1930* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001): 27.





(FIG. 37) Harriett Beecher Stowe,  
*Winter Home at Mandarin, Florida*,  
Photographic Print on Stereo-card,  
Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

(FIG. 38) Harriett Beecher Stowe,  
*Orange Fruit and Blossoms*, Post-  
1865. Oil on Canvas, 15 x 42 in.  
Harriet Beecher Stowe House,  
Hartford, Connecticut



(FIG. 39) Harriett Beecher Stowe, *Magnolia Grandiflora* or  
*Large White Magnolias with Leaves*, 1872-1875 or 1874,  
Harriett Beecher Stowe House, Hartford, Connecticut





(FIG. 40) Harriett Beecher Stowe, *Magnolia Grandiflora* or *Large White Magnolias with Leaves*, 1872-1875 or 1874, Harriett Beecher Stowe House, Hartford, Connecticut



Louis Prang, *Magnolia Grandiflora* 1873. Chromolithograph, New York Public Library, New York



(FIG. 41) Martin Johnson Heade, *Two Oranges with Orange Blossoms*, ca.1880s. Oil on Canvas, 12 in. x 20 1/8 in. Collection of Mrs. Susan de Camp Condit, Morristown, New Jersey



Martin Johnson Heade, *Orange and Orange Blossoms*, 1883-1895. Oil on Canvas, 12 1/4 in. x 19 3/4 in. Sheldon Art Museum, Lincoln, Nebraska



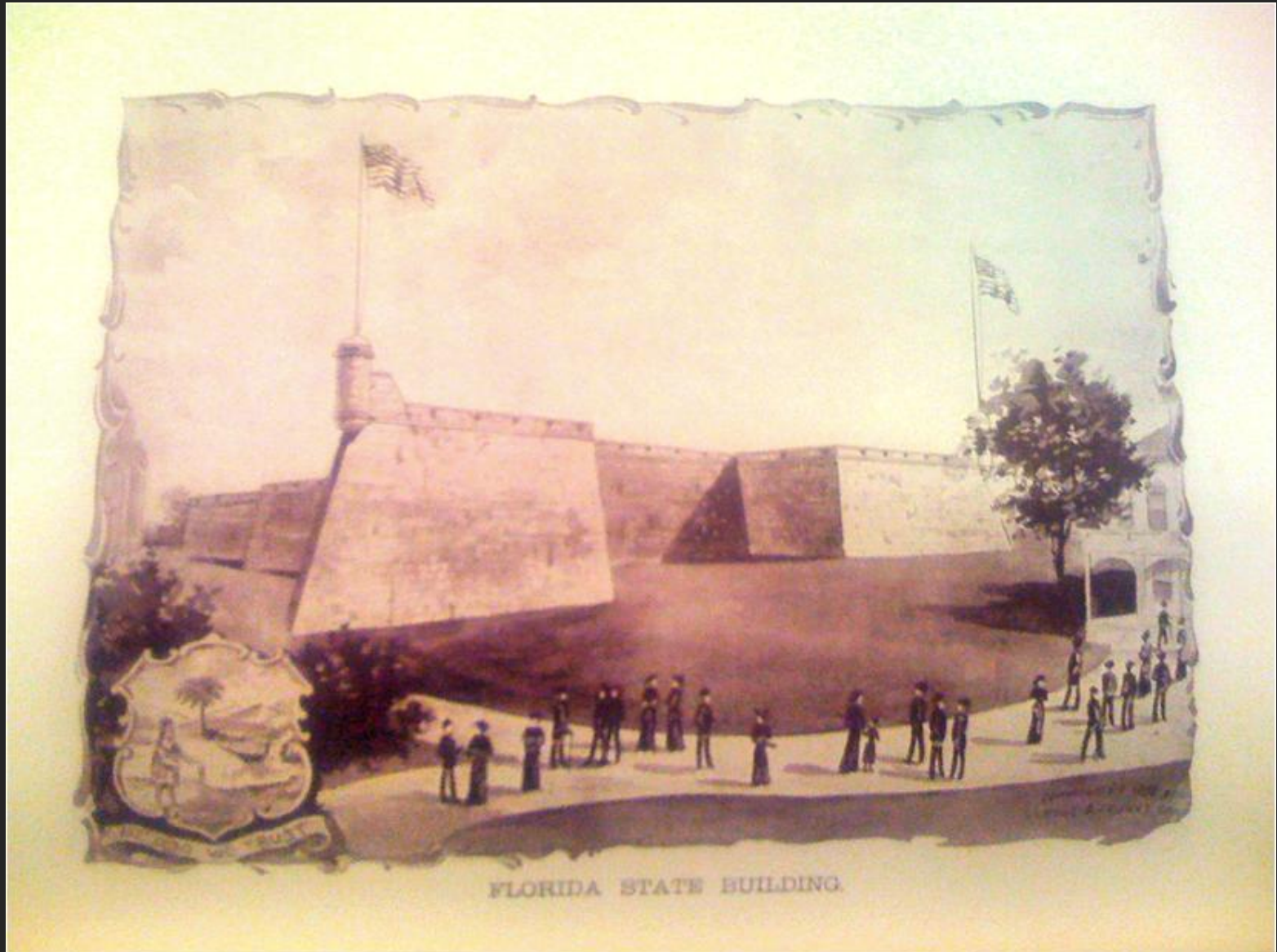
Martin Johnson Heade, *Orange Blossoms*, 1883-1895. Oil on Canvas, 12 x 20 in. Private Collection, Colorado Springs, Colorado



(FIG. 42) William McCloskey, *Wrapped Oranges* 1889. Oil on Canvas, 30.5 x 40.6 in., Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas



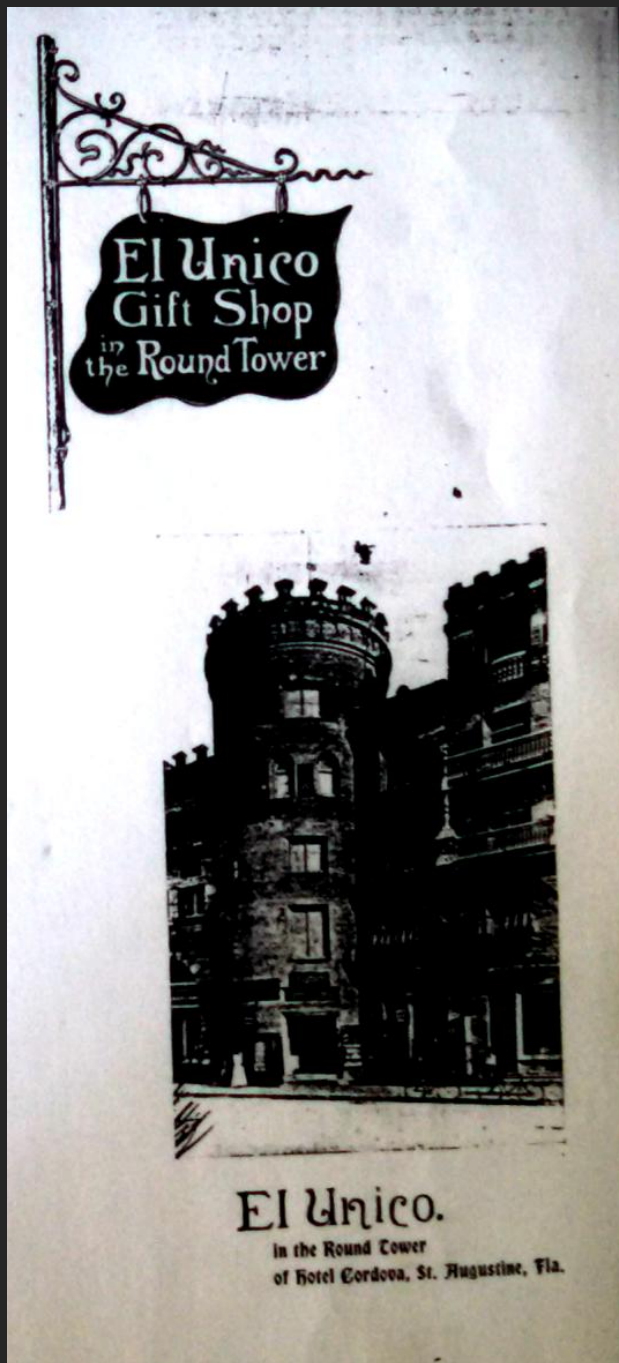
(FIG. 43) J. Manz and Company, "Florida State Building" in Henry Northrop's *Four Centuries of Progress: Or, Panorama of History from the Discovery of the American Continent to the Present Time* (International Publishing Company, 1893).



(FIG. 44) William Henry Jackson, *Ponce de Leon Hotel, St Augustine, Florida, 1880s*.  
Photograph, Detroit Publishing Co., Florida Photographic Collection, Florida State Archives,  
Tallahassee, Florida

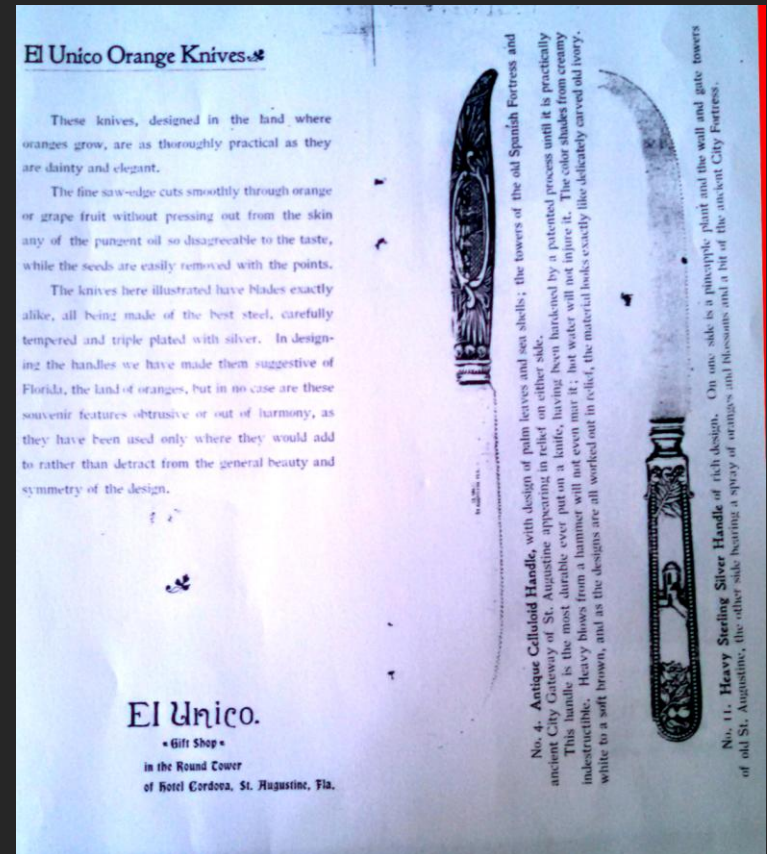






(FIG. 45) *El Unico Gift Shop in the Round Tower, Hotel Cordova, St. Augustine, Florida*, Advertisement from the Nineteenth Century, St. Augustine Historical Society, Florida

(FIG. 46) *Fruit Knives, Celluloid Ban, Oranges, Leaves, and Blossoms and Old City Gates, El Unico Catalogue, 1898. (The first and third knives were copies of Greenleaf & Crosby silverware.) Referenced in Larry Roberts' Florida's Golden Age of Souvenirs: 1890-1930 (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001): 100.*





(FIG. 47) *Florida on Wheels*, 1887-1888. Trade card in the Collection of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts



COMING.

# FLORIDA ON WHEELS.

A Rolling Palace FROM THE Land of Flowers,  
LADEN WITH RARE EXHIBITS,  
ILLUSTRATING TO  
TOURISTS, INVALIDS AND \* \* \* \* \*  
\* \* \* \* \* PROSPECTIVE SETTLERS  
THE  
ATTRACTIONS, ADVANTAGES & RESOURCES  
OF THAT SUNNY LAND.

(OVER.)

60 -

## FLORIDA'S ROLLING EXPOSITION, 1887-8.

© A CONSERVATORY ON WHEELS ©

**T** Now en route from the far Sunny South to the Frozen North, laden with Tropical Plants and Fruits in all their native luxuriance and splendor—**A REGULAR ROLLING PALACE**, built for Florida, at an enormous expense, at the well-known and long established Delaware Car Works of THE JACKSON & SHARP Co., Wilmington, Del., and Gorgeous with Golden Decorations and Tropical Scenery. Wait for the ORANGE TREES LADEN WITH YELLOW FRUIT, GROWING PINEAPPLES, THE BANANA, LEMON, MANGO and MAGNOLIA TREES. Watch for this unique and original Exposition, containing ORANGES, LEMONS, LIMES, CITRON, SHADDOCKS, GRAPE FRUIT, PERSIMMONS, FIGS, GUAVAS, PINEAPPLES, WATERMELONS, COTTON, TOBACCO, OKRA, SPONGES, CORAL, SHELLS and WONDERS FROM THE MIGHTY DEEP. Don't miss THE FLOATING ROCK, and A FAMILY OF ALLIGATORS captured on the picturesque banks of the beautiful St. Johns, and daily on exhibition together with hundreds of other exhibits at or near the Depot. Watch the papers for day and date, and then take

### A TRIP TO FLORIDA.

(OVER.) 0030

HAIGHT & DUDLEY, PRINTERS, POUGHKEEPSIE, N. Y.



(FIG. 48) William Henry Jackson, *An Orange Grove on the Halifax, Florida*, 1880-1897. Dry Plate Negative, Detroit Publishing Company in the collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



(FIG. 49) William Henry Jackson, *Orange Grove near Seville, Florida*, 1880-1897. Dry Plate Negative, Detroit Publishing Company in the collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



William Henry Jackson, *The JT and KW Near Beresford, Florida*, 1880-1897. Dry Plate Negative, Detroit Publishing Company in the collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



(FIG. 50) "Aurantia Grove, Indian River, East Florida," (Springfield: Clark W. Byran and Co., 1872). Graphic Arts collection in the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts

# AURANTIA GROVE,

## INDIAN RIVER, EAST FLORIDA.

NEW YORK OFFICE, 20 NASSAU STREET.  
BLISS, HOOD & BENT, Proprietors.

SAMUEL D. BLISS,  
JOSIAH HOOD,  
EDWARD F. BENT.

A WINTER HOME FOR ALL IN  
THE ORANGE GROVES OF  
FLORIDA.

THE WONDERFUL PROFITS OF  
ORANGE CULTURE.


FOUR HUNDRED PER CENT. ANNUALLY ON  
INVESTMENTS!

**\$200** ANNUAL INCOME FROM AN INVEST-  
MENT OF **\$50.**

**\$1000** ANNUAL INCOME FROM AN INVESTMENT OF  
**\$240.**

**\$5000** ANNUAL INCOME FROM AN INVESTMENT OF **\$1175.**

**RAISE YOUR OWN ORANGES!** | **AVOID THE TRYING NORTHERN WINTERS!**  
A MODERATE OUTLAY, AND A LIFE SUPPORT!

 THE Enormous Profits of the Orange Culture are beginning to be appreciated, especially by those who have visited Florida, the natural home of the Orange. Of the thousands of tourists, inland and others, who have viewed the golden fruit, and investigated the still more golden profits of an Orange Grove, nearly every one has felt the desire to engage in the richly paying business, which, with other advantages, gives one a delightful home, securing life and strength to the invalid and enabling all to escape our severe Northern Winters. To all desiring it, we offer an opportunity such as has never before occurred, for owning an Orange Grove.

One land is situated on the Eastern coast of Florida, below the line of frost, the best of Summers tempered by delightful sea breezes, and is especially adapted to the growth of the Orange. It is divided into lots, fifty feet by one hundred, each fronting on an avenue sixty feet in width.

Upon each lot we set out ten Orange Trees, which we guarantee to bring into bearing. These trees are of the kind most approved in Florida,—the wild tree transplanted and secured with the sweet Orange.

A receipt for maintenance, and contract to properly care for the lots and trees, is sent immediately to each investor; and, as soon thereafter as possible, a **Warranty Deed** will be forwarded,—giving each person the entire ownership and control of their Orchard.

With the Deed a Map, showing the situation of the lot, or lots, will be sent. We will care for the Orchard for three years at prices given below, and as much longer as may be desired at the same rates as in the third year.

The fruit will be picked and sent to the individual owners, or sold for them on commission, as desired.

Parties owning orchards are at liberty to take charge of their property at any time.

CLARK W. BYRAN & COMPANY, PRINTERS, SPRINGFIELD, MASS.



(FIG. 51) *Trade Card for Alden Fruit Vinegar Company, Late-Nineteenth Century.*  
Collection of the Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library, Delaware



(FIG. 52) William Aiken Walker, *Orange Grove*, Post-1865. Oil on Canvas, 12 x 20 in., Referenced in Cynthia Seibel's *The Sunny South: The Life and Art of William Aiken Walker* (Charleston: University of South Carolina Press, 1995): 178.





(FIG. 53) Orange Culture in Florida," *The American Odd Fellow: A Monthly Magazine* (Sept. 1, 1872): 183-186.



FIG. 2.—ORANGE TREE, THIRTY FEET HIGH.

(FIG. 54) Henry Ossawa Tanner, *Florida*, 1894. Oil on Canvas, 18 ½ x 22 ½ in.,  
Collection of Walter O. Evans



(FIG. 55) Henry Ossawa Tanner, *Florida*, 1894. Oil on Canvas, 18 x 22 in. Collection of Louis Tanner Moore





(FIG. 56) George Henry Hall, *Still Life with Watermelon*, Date Unknown. Oil on Panel, 8.7 x 11 in., Christie's Auction House



George Henry Hall, *Still Life with Watermelon, Grapes, and Flowers*, 1866. Oil on Canvas, 50 x 40 in., Private Collection



(FIG. 57) George Henry Hall, *Young Woman with Watermelon and Grapes*, 1867. Oil on Canvas, 27 x 20 in., Eldred's Auction House



(FIG. 58) Lemuel Wilmarth, *Girl with Peaches*, 1881. Oil on Canvas, 22 x 18 in, Shannon's Fine Art Auction





(FIG. 59) Albert F. King, *Watermelon with Plug*, Date Unknown. Oil on Canvas, 18 x 24 in. Godel and Co. Fine Art, New York City, New York



Albert F. King, *Still Life with a Slice of Watermelon*, Date Unknown. Oil on Canvas, 18 x 24 in. D. Wigmore Fine Art Inc, New York City, New York



(FIG. 60) Albert F. King, *Still Life with Watermelon and Jug*, Date Unknown. Oil on Canvas, 22 x 27 in. , Private Collection



(FIG. 61) Albert F. King, *Still Life with Watermelon and Cantaloupe*, 1895. Oil on Canvas, 18 x 24, Sotheby's Auction House



Albert F. King, *Still Life with Watermelon and Honeydew*, 1895. Oil on Canvas, 20 x 30 in., Private Collection



Albert F. King, *Still Life with Watermelon, Cantaloupe, Apples, and Grapes*, 1895. Oil on Canvas, Private Collection

F(IG. 62) George W. Platt, *Still Life with Cantaloupe and Grapes*, 1880s. Oil on Canvas, 30 x 25 in., Christie's Auction House



(FIG. 63) George W. Platt, *Still Life with Watermelon*, Late-Nineteenth Century. Oil on Canvas, 22 x 27 in., Ivey-Selkirk Auction House





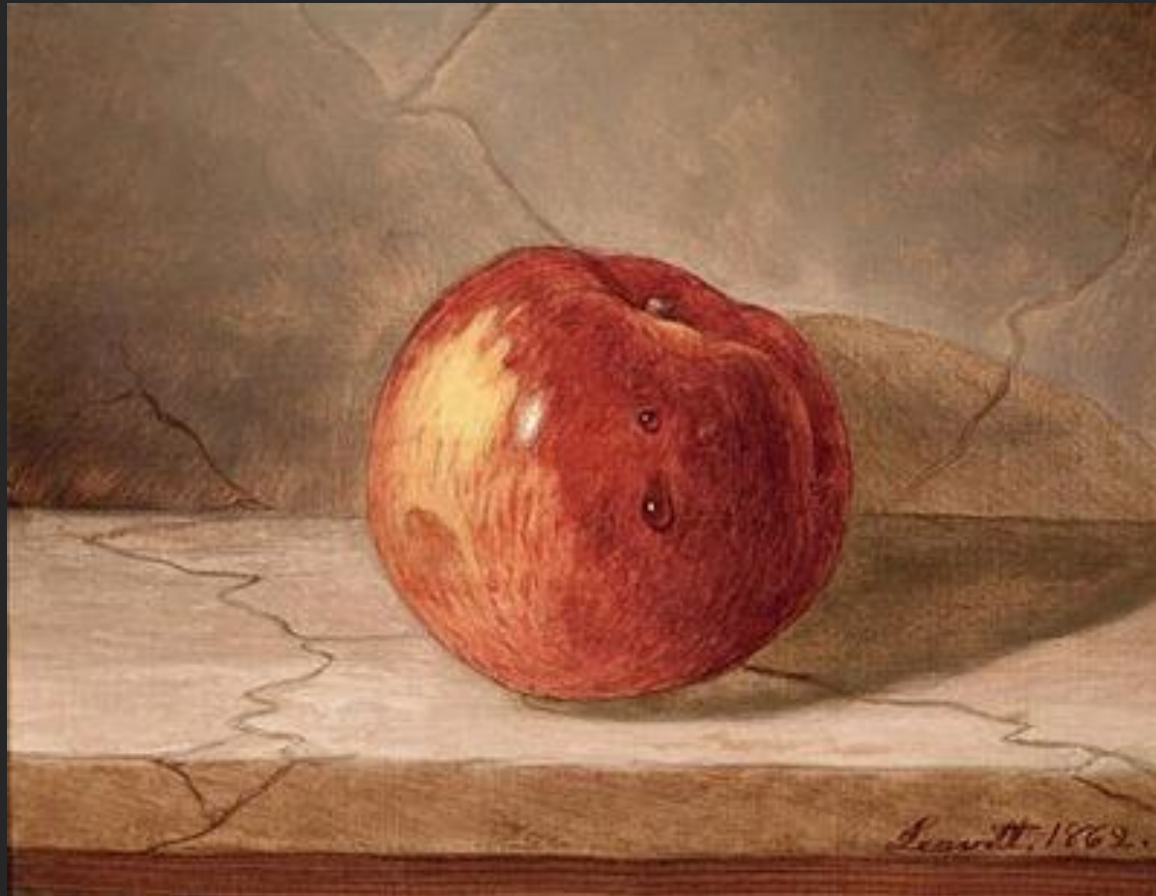
(FIG. 64) Robert Spear Dunning, *The First Cut: Watermelon and Knife*, 1899. Oil on Canvas, 12 ½ x 17 ¼ in., Hirsch and Adler (Gift of Coe Kerr Gallery)



(FIG. 65) Edward Edmondson, Jr., *Still Life with Melons, Pear and Peach*, 1862. Oil on Academy Board, 18 x 24 in., The Dayton Art Institute, Ohio



(FIG. 66) Edward Chalmers Leavitt, *Apple on a Marble Tabletop*, 1862. Oil on Canvas, 6.5 x 8.5 in., Shannon's Fine Art Auctioneer

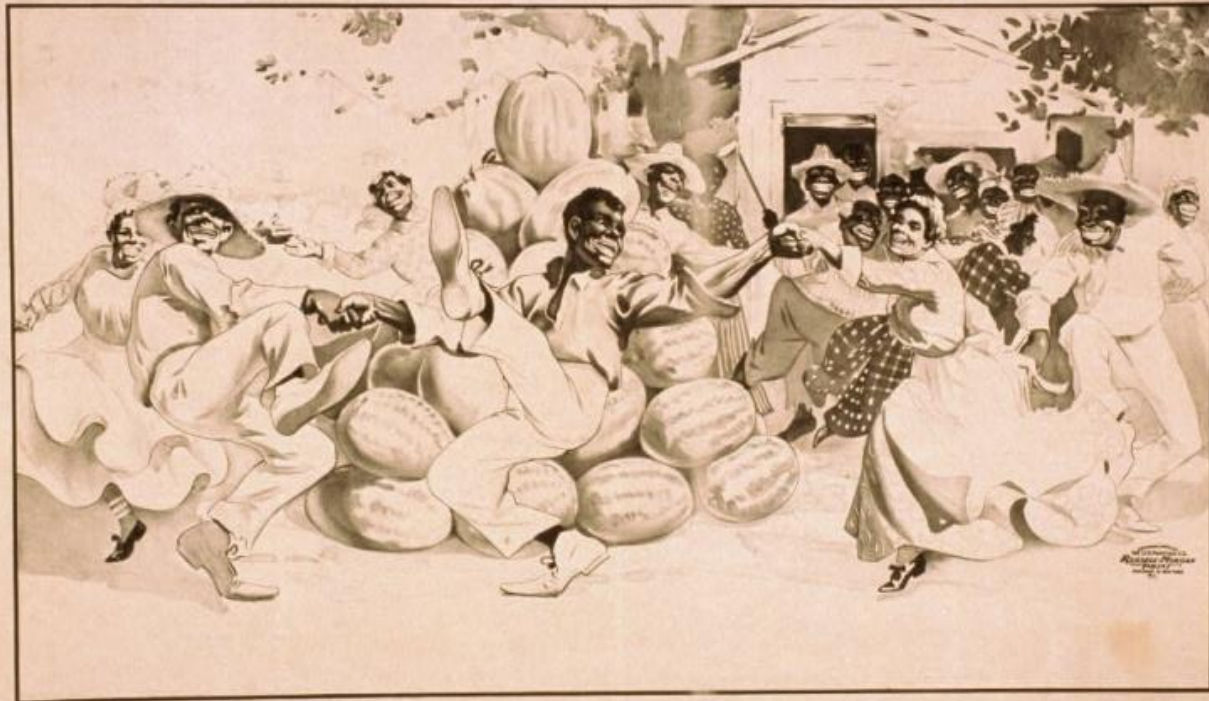


(FIG. 67) George Henry Hall, *A Plea for Peace*, 1861. Oil on Board, 18 ¾ x 15 in., Private Collection





(FIG. 68) U.S. Printing Co., *African Americans Dancing Around a Pile of Watermelons*, 1900. Lithograph, 71 x 105 cm. Library of Congress, Washington, DC



(FIG. 69) *Clark and Morgan's Trade Card*, Grossman Trade Card Collection, Post- Civil War, Winterthur Library, Delaware (Image taken by the Author)



*Rice's Seeds Trade Card*, Grossman Trade Card Collection, Post-Civil War, Winterthur Library, Delaware

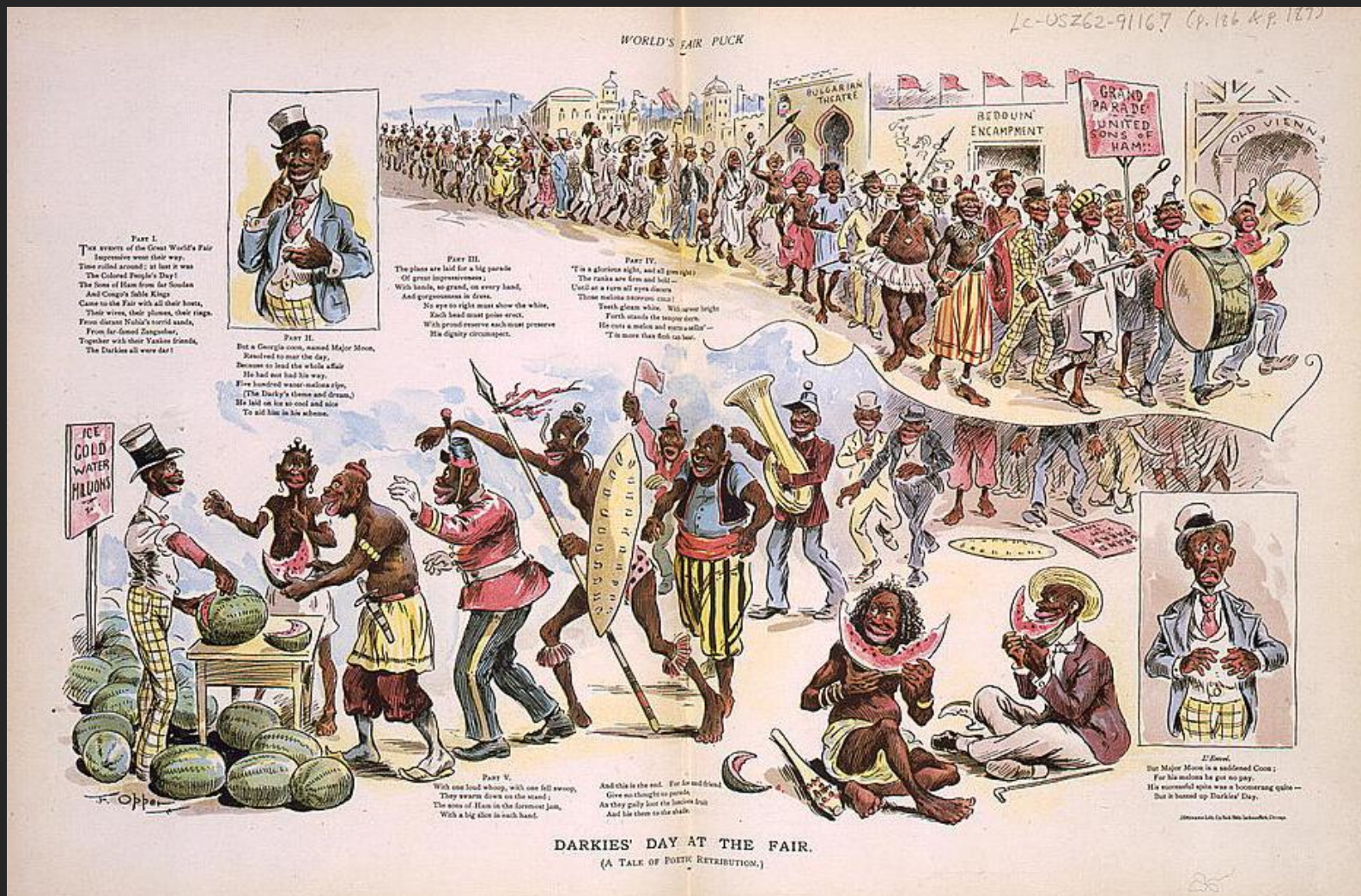


(FIG. 70) *E.J. Bowen's Large Lodi Watermelon*, Date Unknown. Jay T. Last Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino





(FIG. 71) Frederick Burr Opper, "Darkies' Day at the Fair," *Puck Magazine* (Aug. 21, 1893): 186-187. Lithograph, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.





(FIG. 72) "Sunny South," on spoon handle, "Jacksonville, Fla." on enameled top, Pictured in Larry Roberts' *Florida's Golden Age of Souvenirs, 1890-1930* (University Press of Florida, 2001): 90.



Enameled Tops, "St. Augustine," Pictured in Larry Roberts' *Florida's Golden Age of Souvenirs, 1890-1930* (University Press of Florida, 2001): 90.



(FIG. 73) Sigmund Krausz, "Oh Golly, but I'se Happy!," *Street Types of Chicago: Character Studies*, 1891. Private Collection

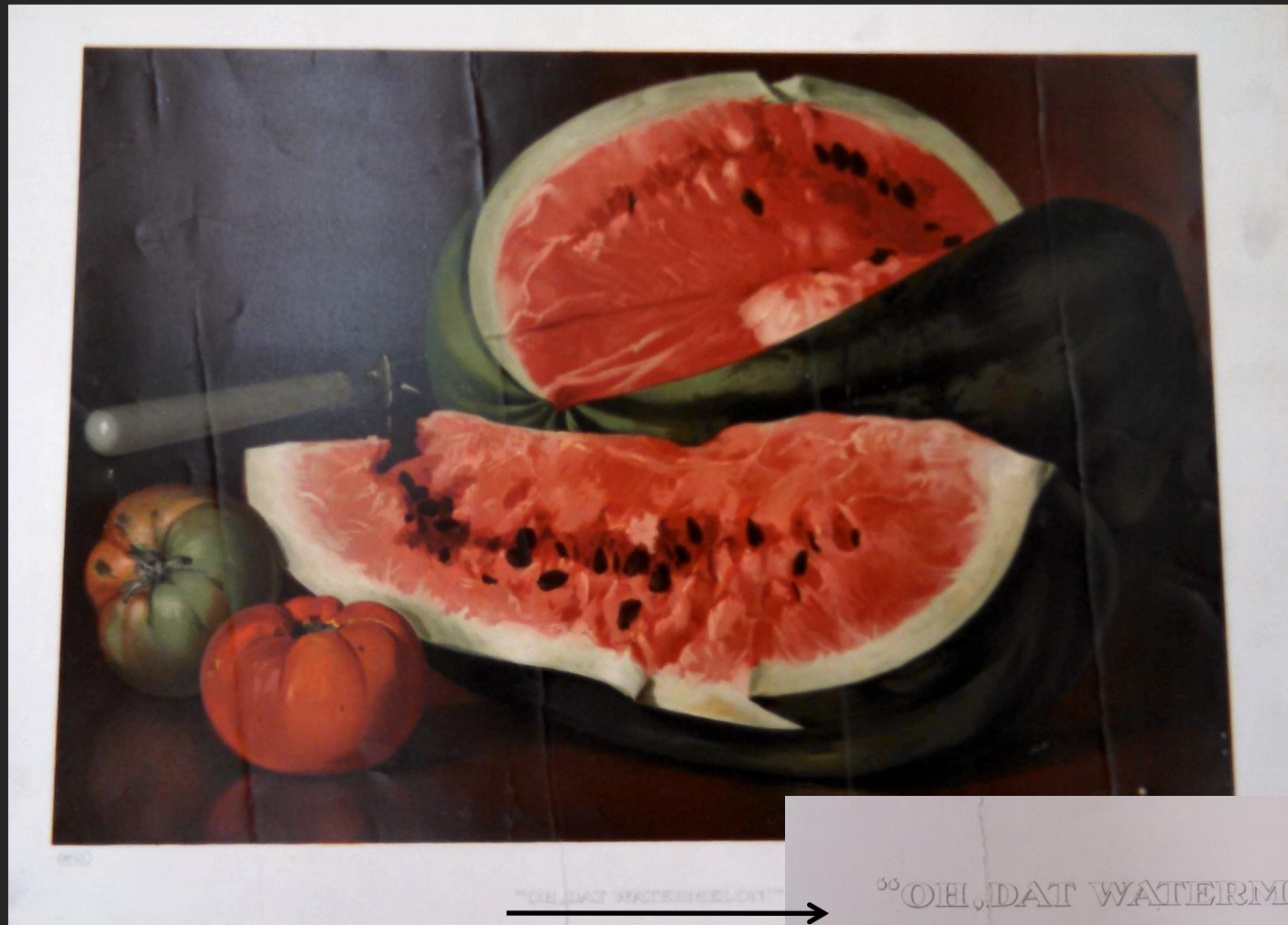


(FIG. 74) "Boy Eating Watermelon," *Grosman Bros. Seeds Trade Card*, 1880s. Grossman Trade Card Collection, Winterthur Library, Delaware





(FIG. 75) John Edmund Califano, *Oh, Dat Watermelon!* 1896. Printed by the Amlico Publishing Company, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., based on original painting entitled, *Watermelon*, Oil on Canvas, 14 x 20 in., Stuart Holman Auctioneer (Image taken by the Author)



“OH, DAT WATERMELON!”

(FIG. 76) *Oh! Dat Watermelon*, 1874. Written by Luke Schoolcraft, Arranged by John Braham, Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**Oh! dat Watermelon.**

Composed and sung by Horace Weston, Champion Banjoist.

My old misses promised me,  
 Gwine to git a home bye and bye,  
 When she died she'd set me free,  
 Gwine to git a home bye and bye.  
 She did live till she got bald,  
 Gwine to git a home bye and bye,  
 And she never died at all,  
 Gwine to git a home bye and bye.

Chorus: Den, oh! dat watermelon—  
 Lamb of goodness you must die,  
 I'm gwine join de contraband children,  
 Gwine to git a home bye and bye.

A shoo-fly cut a pigun wing;  
 Gwine to git a home bye and bye:  
 A rattle-snake rolled in a 'possum's skin,  
 Gwine to git a home bye and bye:  
 Cow path crooked gwine frough de wood,  
 Gwine to git a home bye and bye:  
 Misses ses I shan't. I ses I should,  
 Gwine to git a home bye and bye.

Chorus.

Sister Sue and old aunt Sal,  
 Gwine to git a home bye and bye:  
 Both lived down in Shin-bone al,  
 Gwine to git a home bye and bye:  
 Name of de house, name on de door,  
 Gwine to git a home bye and bye:  
 Big green spot on de grocery store,  
 Gwine to git a home bye and bye.

Chorus.

*Gim Me Dat Sweet Water-Melon*, 1883. Written by Fred Lyons, Published by Richard Saalfeld, Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**GIM ME DAT SWEET WATER-MELON.**

SONG & CHORUS.

Words and Music by FRED LYONS.

INTRODUCTION.



1. If you want to see dis dar-key smile, Gim me dat sweet wa-ter -  
 2. I'll drink all de juice and eat up de rine, Gim me dat sweet wa-ter -

- mel - on! I al - ways said from a lit - tle chile,  
 - mel - on! It makes me feel so good and fine,

Copyright, 1883, by R. A. Saalfeld.

(FIG. 77) Currier and Ives, *O Dat Watermillion!*, 1882. Lithograph, Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (Image taken by the Author)



(FIG. 78) *Jinks, I Could'a Sworn I Saw A Leetle Darky in the Melon Patch*, 1897.  
Stereoview, Underwood and Underwood Publishing Co.



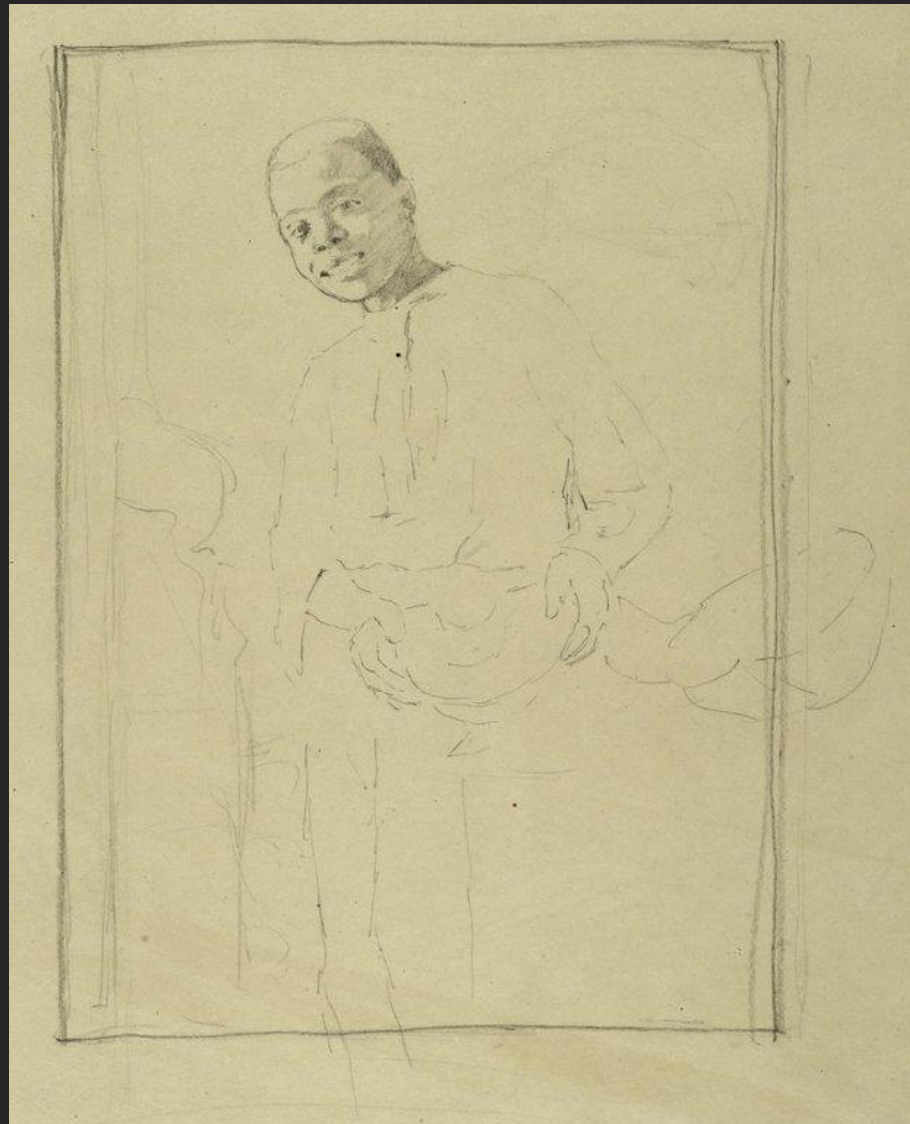


(FIG. 79) Thomas Hovenden, *I Know'd It Was Ripe*, 1885. Oil on Canvas, 22 x 16 in. Brooklyn Museum, New York





(FIG. 80) Thomas Hovenden, *Study for I Know'd It Was Ripe*, 1885. Graphite on Tan Wove Paper, 11 x 8 in. Brooklyn Museum, New York



(FIG. 81) William Aiken Walker, *Little Negro Girl Eating Watermelon*, 1885. Oil on Board, 16 ¼ in. x 12 ¼ in., Possibly in the Collection of Felix H. Kuntz, New Orleans



(FIG. 82) Courier Co., *Plantation Banjo Player*, 1875. Lithograph, 53 x 34 cm., Collection of Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



William Aiken Walker, *Little Negro Girl Eating Watermelon*, 1885. Oil on Board, 16 ¼ in. x 12 ¼ in., Possibly in the Collection of Felix H. Kuntz, New Orleans



Calvert Lithograph Co., *African American Seated, Playing Banjo*, 1892. Lithograph, 73 x 50 cm., Collection of Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.





(FIG. 83) Winslow Homer, *Watermelon Boys*, 1876. Oil on Canvas, 24 ¼ x 38 ½, Cooper-Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum, New York



(FIG. 84) *Water-Melon Eaters*, 5 1/8 x 7 in., based on Winslow Homer's *Watermelon Boys*, Illustrated in Wood Engraving in "American Painters-Winslow Homer and F.A. Bridgman" *Art Journal* (Aug. 1878): 225, in the collection of Winslow Homer Graphics, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas



(FIG. 85) William Michael Harnett, *For Sunday's Dinner*, 1888. Oil on Canvas, 37 1/8 x 21 1/8 in. Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois





(FIG. 86) De Scott Evans, *The Irish Question*, 1880s. Oil on Canvas, 12 x 10 in., Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois





(FIG. 87) Charles Ethan Porter, *Broken Watermelon*, 1884. Oil on Canvas, 20 x 24 in., Collection of the Schonberger Family



Charles Ethan Porter, *Cracked Watermelon*, 1890. Oil on Canvas, 19 x 28 in., Collection of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, LLC, New York City



(FIG. 88) Henry Ossawa Tanner, *The Banjo Lesson*, 1893,. Oil on Canvas, 49 x 35 ½ in., Hampton University Museum, Hampton, Virginia



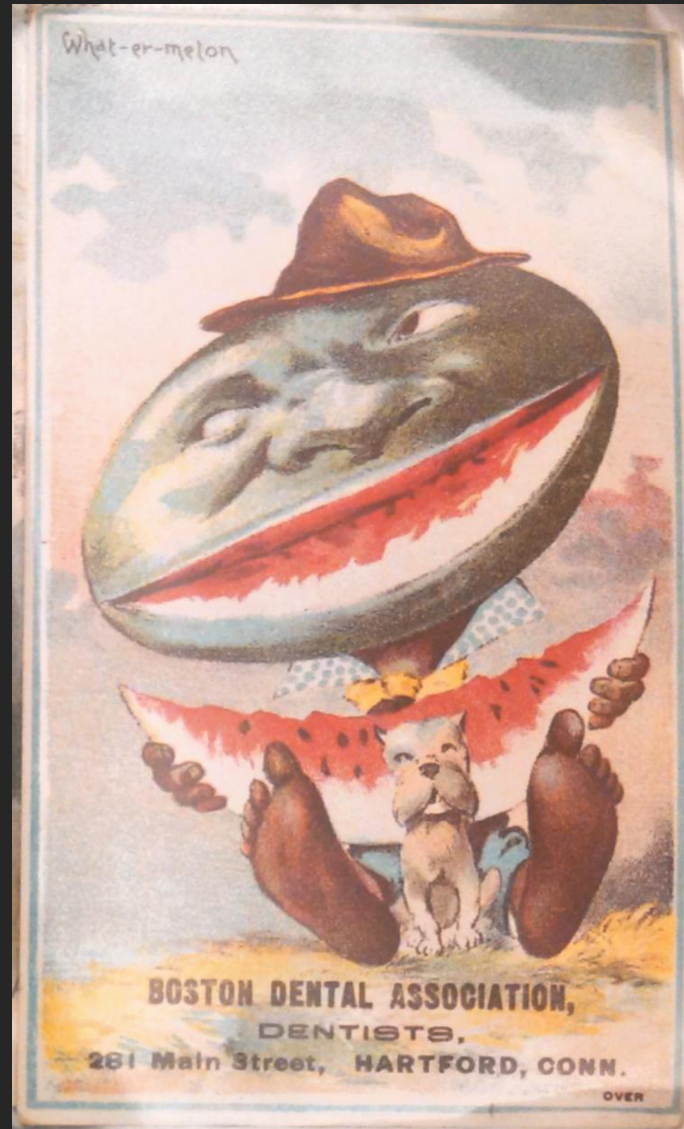
(FIG. 89) *Sapolio Soap Trade Cards*, Enoch Soap Company, 1890s. Ink on paper, Grossman Trade Card Collection, Winterthur Library, Delaware (Images taken by the



"Johnson's Dixie Watermelon," Johnson & Stokes Seedsmen Trade Price List, 1890. Philadelphia, Collection of the Winterthur Library, Delaware



(FIG. 90) *Boston Dental Association Trade Card*, Late-Nineteenth Century. Lithograph, Jay T. Last Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, California



(FIG. 91) *Bay State Fertilizer Trade Card*,  
Late-Nineteenth Century. Lithograph,  
Jay T. Last Collection, Huntington Library,  
San Marino, California



(FIG. 92) *Rice's Seeds Trade Cards*, Late-Nineteenth Century. Lithograph, Jay T. Last Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, California

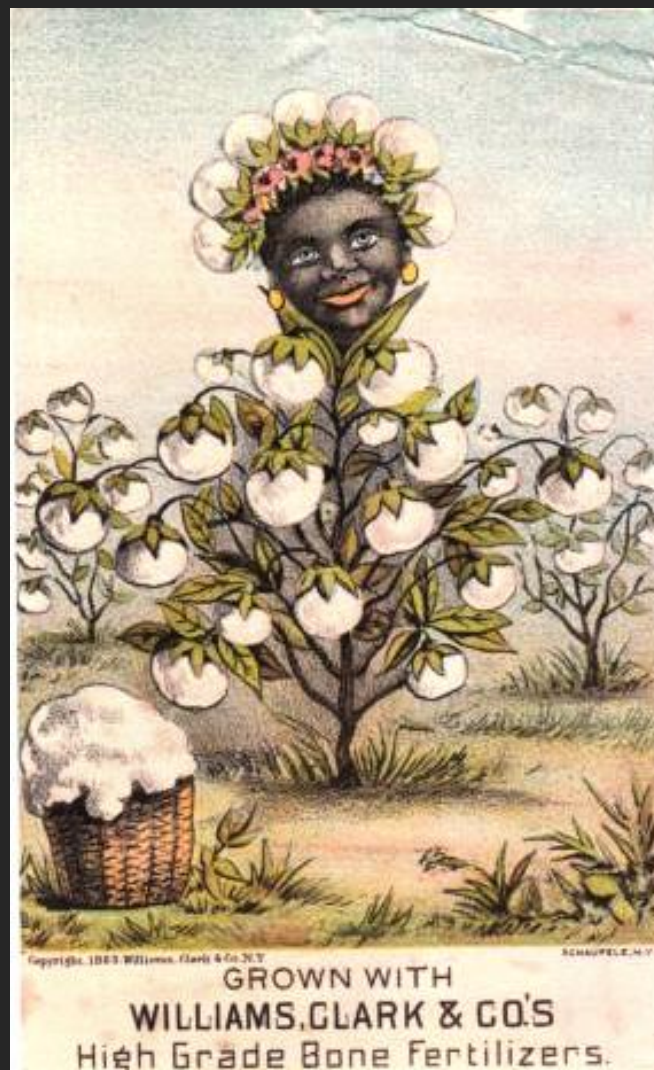


*Williams Clark and Co. Bone Fertilizer Trade Card*, Late-Nineteenth Century. Lithograph, Jay T. Last Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, California





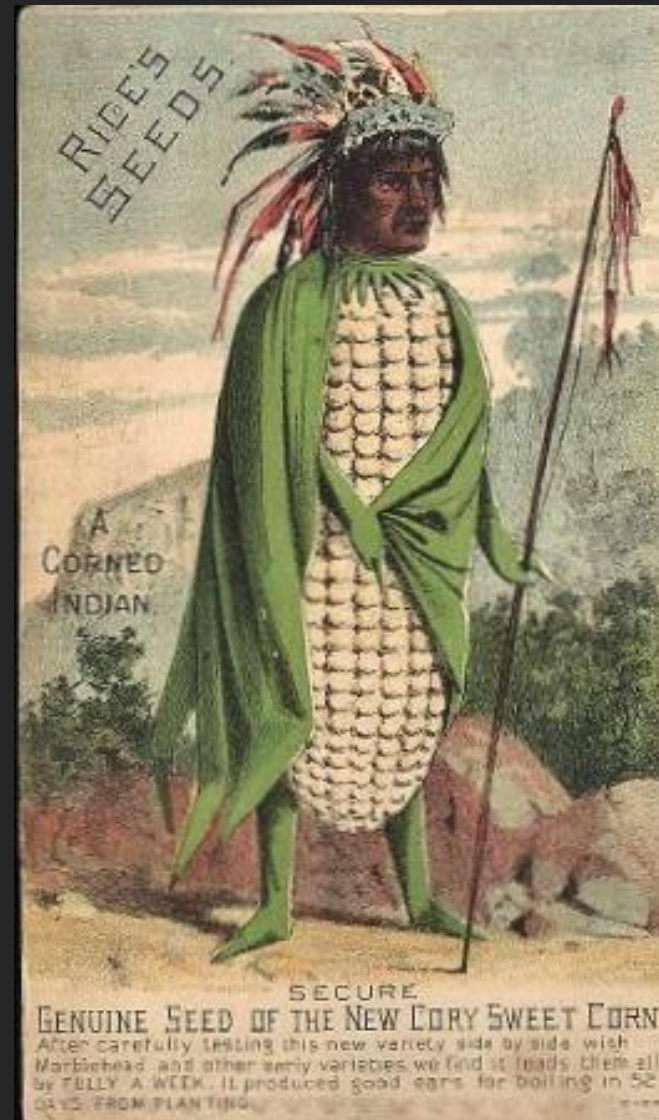
(FIG. 93) *Williams Clark and Co. Bone Fertilizer Trade Card*, Late-Nineteenth Century. Lithograph, Jay T. Last Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, California



(FIG. 94) *Williams Clark and Co. Bone Fertilizer Trade Card*, Late-Nineteenth Century. Lithograph, Jay T. Last Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, California



*Rice's Seeds Trade Card*, Late-Nineteenth Century. Lithograph, Jay T. Last Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, California





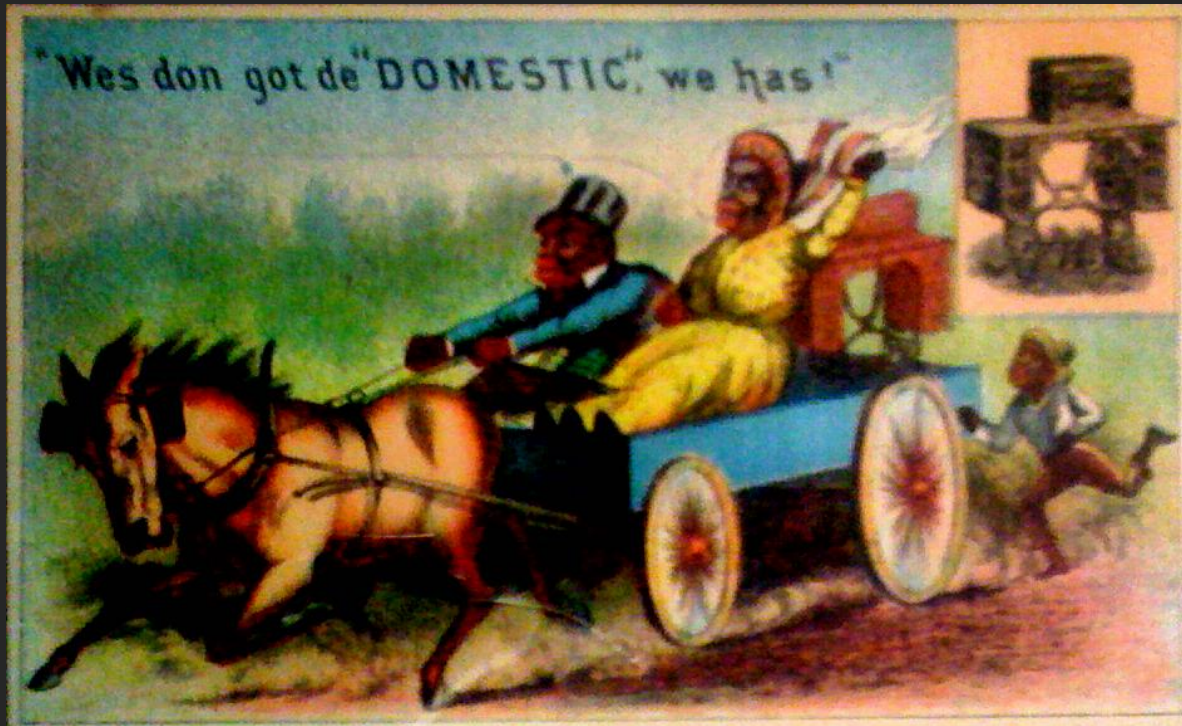
(FIG. 95) *Bay State Fertilizer Trade Cards*, Late-Nineteenth Century. Lithograph, Jay T. Last Collection, Huntington, San Marino, California



(FIG. 96) Thomas Henry Hope, *Still life with Breakfast Setting*, 1880-1890. Oil on Canvas, 18 x 24 in., Sotheby's Auction House



(FIG. 97) *Domestic Sewing Machine Co. Trade Card*, Late-Nineteenth Century. Lithograph, Grossman Trade Card Collection, Winterthur Library, Delaware (Image taken by the author)





(FIG. 98) Jerry Holbert, "White House Invader Got Farther Than Originally Thought," *Boston Herald*, October 1, 2014



(FIG. 99) Currier and Ives, *Fruits of the Tropics*, 1871. Hand-colored lithograph, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.





(FIG. 100) "Landing Bananas and other Tropical Fruits Burling Slip, New York,"  
*Harper's Weekly* June 1870, Engraved After a Drawing by A.R. Ward



(FIG. 101) John George Brown, *Banana Boy*,  
Date Unknown. Oil on Canvas, 24 x 16 in.,  
Private Collection





(FIG. 102) “Have One” Advertisement, Referenced in Douglas Cazaux Sackman’s *Orange Empire: California and the Fruits of Eden* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005): 91



Figure 11. The motif of the woman’s hand offering up oranges, and more, was common in citrus advertising. Have One brand label from the 1930s. (From author’s collection.)

“My Lady Fruits” Advertisement, Referenced in Reay Tannahill’s *Food in History* (New York: Broadway Books, 1995): 329.

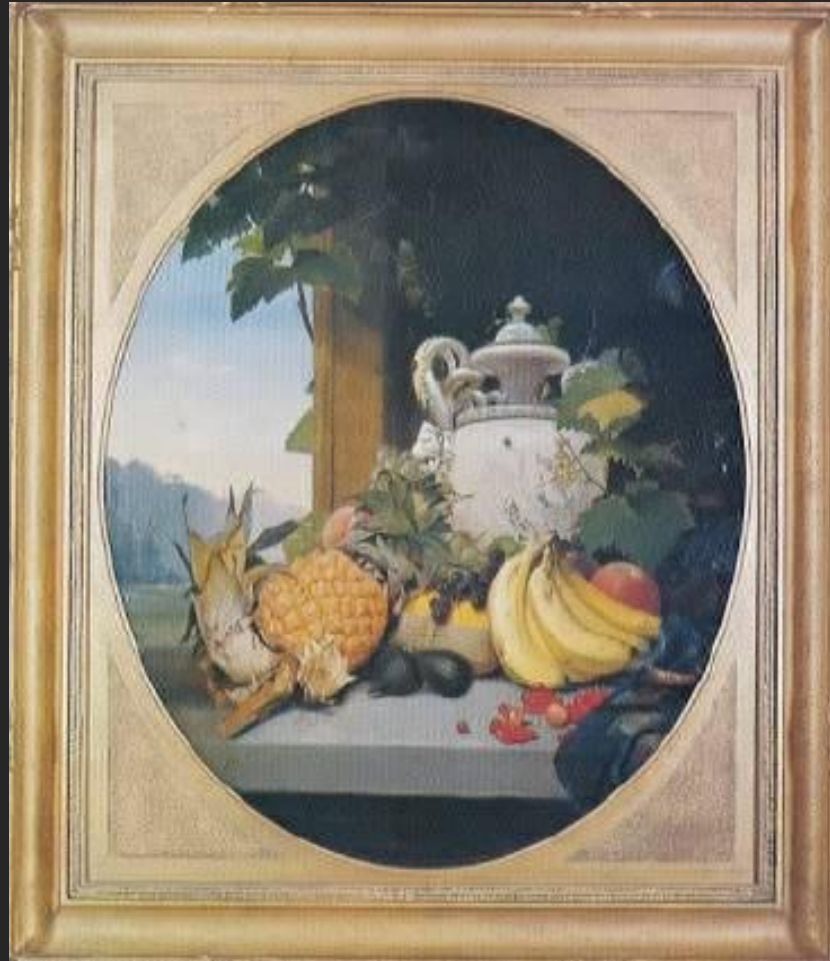


(FIG. 103) Hannah (Harriet) Brown Skeele, *Fruit Piece*, 1860. Oil on Canvas, 20 x 23 7/8 in., Collection of the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois





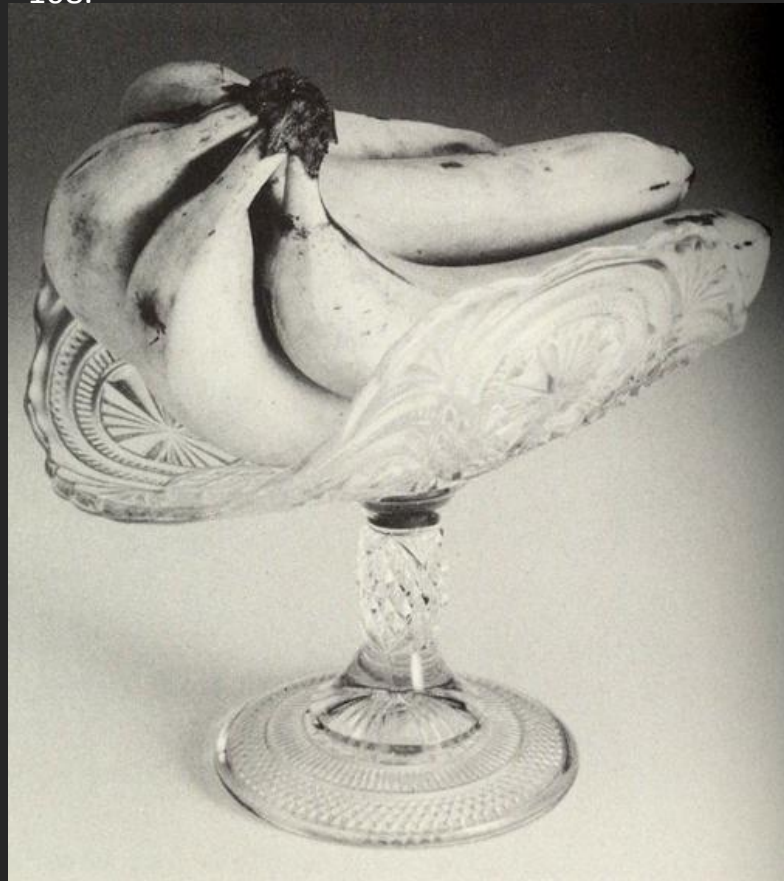
(FIG. 104) Samuel Marsden Brookes, *Tropical Fruit*, 1864. Oil on Canvas, Location Unknown.



(FIG. 105) Jan Davidsz de Heem, *Still Life with Lobster*, 1643. Oil on Canvas, 79 x 102 cm., The Wallace Collection, London, England



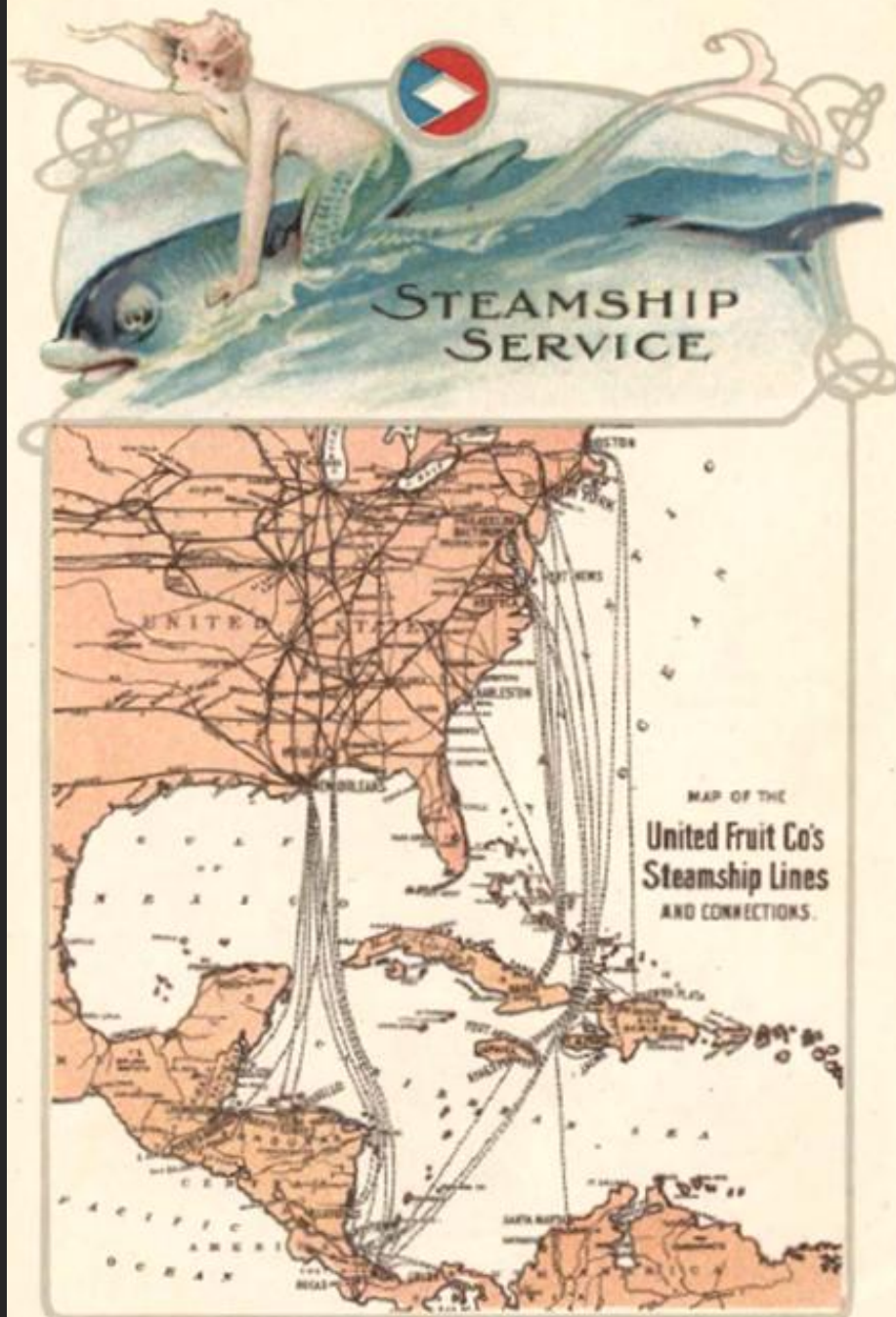
(FIG. 106) Banana Bowl, Nineteenth Century,  
Referenced in Susan Williams' *Savory Suppers and  
Fashionable Feasts: Dining in Victorian America*  
(Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996):  
108.





(FIG. 107) *A Short History of the Banana and a Few Recipes for Its Use*, Ed. by The Booking Cooking School (Boston: United Fruit Company, 1904): 30.





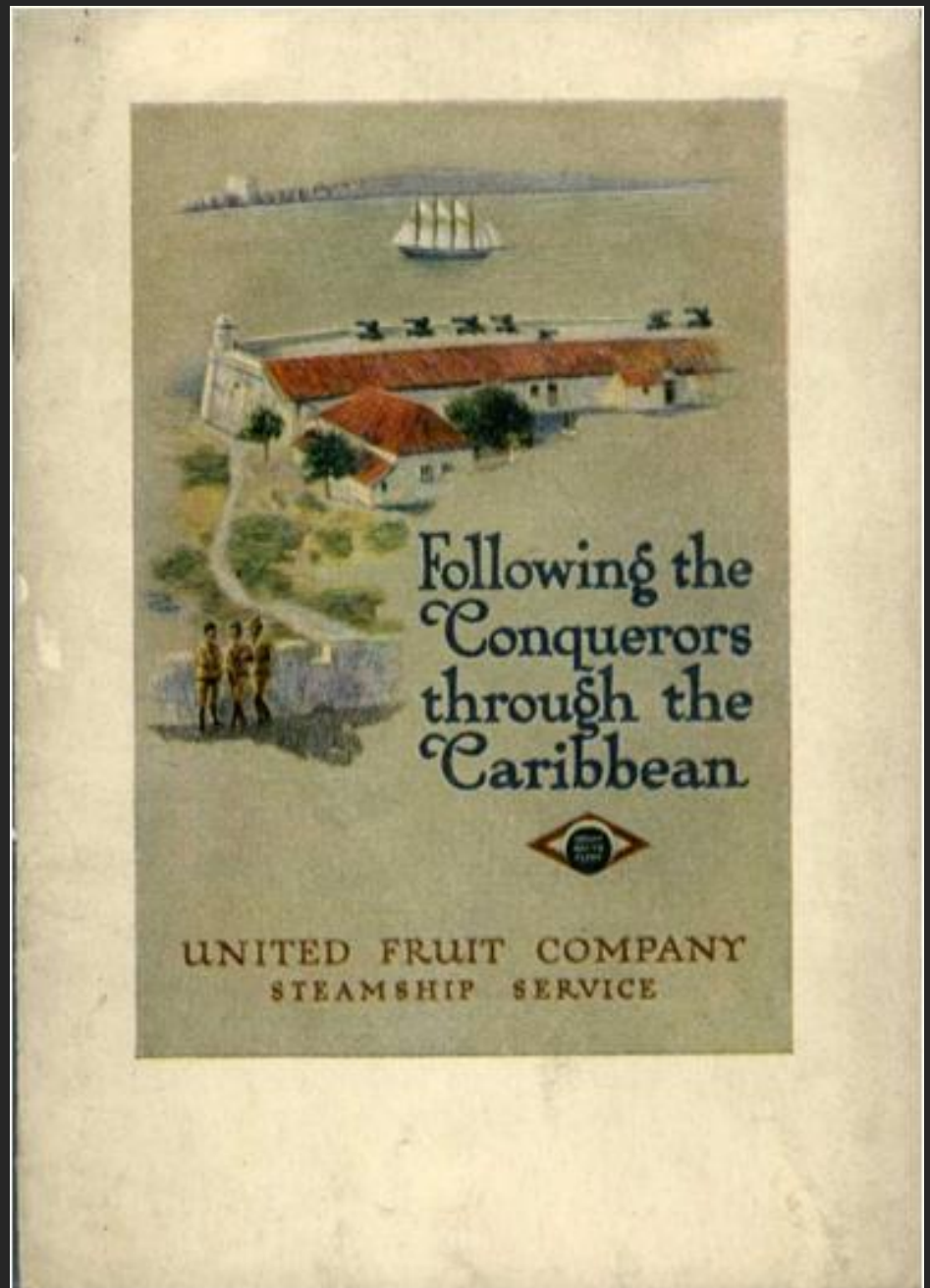
(FIG. 108) *A Short History of the Banana and a Few Recipes for Its Use*, Ed. by The Booking Cooking School (Boston: United Fruit Company, 1904)



(FIG. 109) Emanuel Leutze, *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way*, 1861. Oil on Canvas, 33 ¼ x 43 3/8 in., Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.



(FIG. 110) United Fruit Company, "Following the Conquerors through the Caribbean," 1922.  
Collection of Saul Zalesch at the Winterthur  
Library, Delaware



(FIG. 111) Moisés Barrios, *Banana Toys*, 2003. Oil on Canvas, Collection of the Artist.





(FIG. 112) Moisés Barrios, *Vitrina Banana Republic #7*, 2006. Oil on Canvas, 43 1/4 X 59 in., Virginia Miller Gallery, Miami, Florida



Moisés Barrios, *Vitrina Banana Republic #6*, 2006. Oil on Canvas, 43 1/4 X 59 in., Virginia Miller Gallery, Miami, Florida



(FIG. 113) Moisés Barrios, *Vitrina Banana Republic*, 2006. Oil on Canvas, 43 1/4 X 59 in.



(FIG. 114) Moisés Barrios, *Vitrina Banana Republic*, 2006. Oil on Canvas, 43 1/4 X 59 in.





(FIG. 115) Moisés Barrios, *Clock Time*, 2003.  
Oil on Canvas, 130 x 130 cm.



Moisés Barrios, *La Niña de Guatemala*, Klaus Steinmetz  
Contemporary Art, San Jose, Guatemala





(FIG. 116) Moisés Barrios, *Contaminaciones*,  
Date Unknown. Print Advertisement, Exhibited  
in La ERRE, 2013



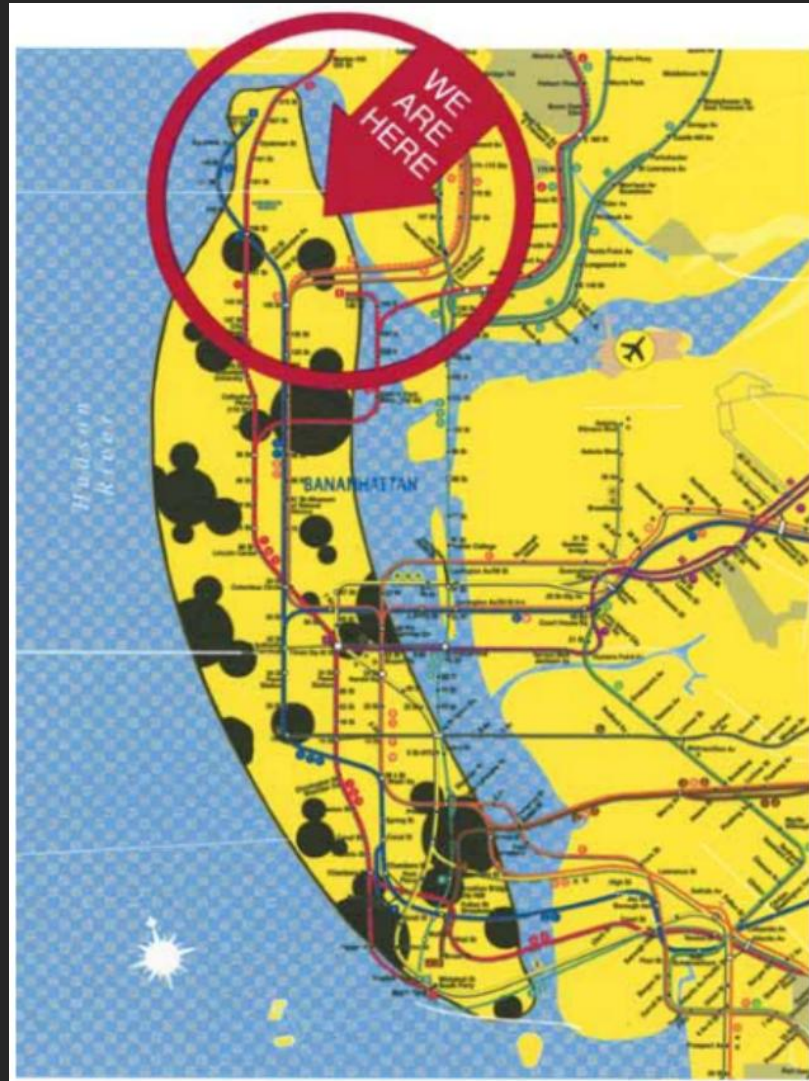
(FIG. 117) Luis Miguel Luciano, *Pure Plantainum* , 2006. Green Plantain plated in Platinum, 12 x 3 x 3 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C.



(FIG. 118) Luis Miguel Luciano, *Pure Plantanium* 2006. Green Plantain plated in Platinum, 12 x 3 x 3 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C.



(FIG. 119) Yunió Chiqui Mendoza, *Bananahattan*, 2010. Archival inkjet and screenprint on paper., 9 x 7 in., Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.





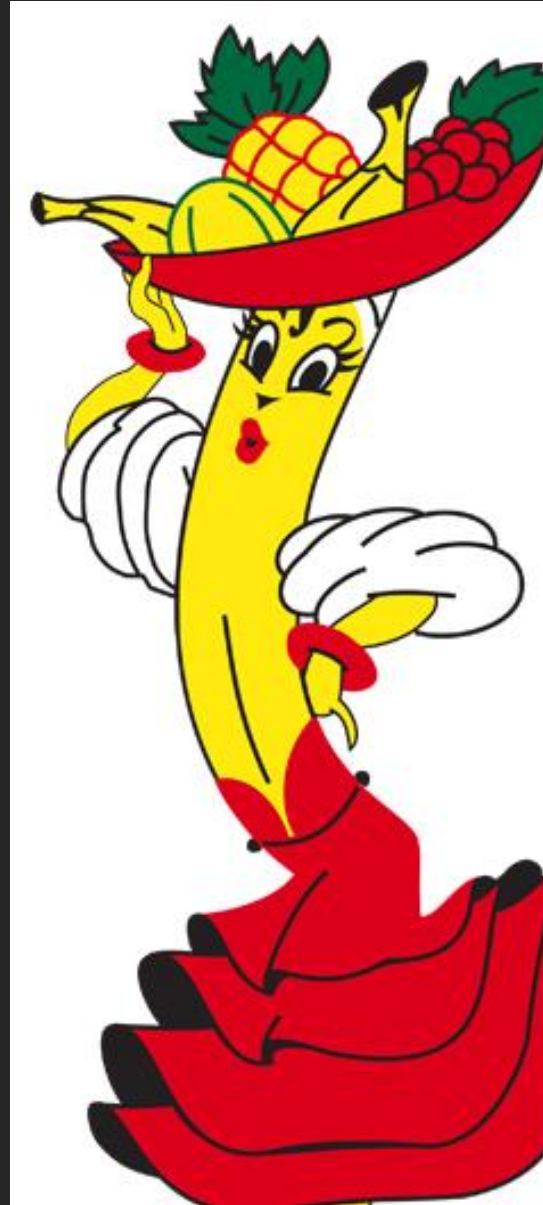
(FIG. 120) Julio Valdez, *Brother and Plátanos*, 2005.  
Archival Pigment Print on Canvas, Ed. 10, 22 x 30 in.



(FIG. 121) Moisés Barrios, *Absolut Banana*, Circa 2006. Oil on Canvas.



(FIG. 122) Dik Brown, *Chiquita Banana*, 1944.





(FIG. 123) Kat Rodriguez and the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, Statue of Liberty, 2000. Paper Mâché, Collection of the National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

