



AMERICAN EXPRESS TRAIN

1864

C0130-G0143

(IMAGE IDENTIFIED AS A VIEW OF THE WEST SHORE RAILROAD
ALONG THE HUDSON RIVER.

The Express Train

Currier & Ives, realizing the American public's fascination with the railroad, produced over thirty prints with the train as the only subject. Trains grew in importance throughout the century as, traveling on more than 30,000 miles of track, they crisscrossed the nation providing transportation for both people and goods. Currier & Ives produced meticulously detailed "portraits" of select trains in order to satisfy public demand for images of the Airon horse. In this work, a locomotive pulls a tender, a baggage car and seven passenger cars around a curve in the track.

Who were Currier & Ives?

Currier & Ives were businessmen who owned a New York City lithography firm, called "Currier & Ives," that printed over 7500 different prints from 1857 until 1907. The company began in 1835 with Nathaniel Currier, a printmaker, who was born in Massachusetts. Currier's bookkeeper James Merritt Ives became a partner in the company in 1857 and often worked with artists to create the images for which the firm is famous. Though James Ives designed a series of prints published by the firm, neither he nor Nathaniel Currier was an artist. Instead, the men employed artists and lithographers to create images and also purchased designs from independent artists. Among the artists that worked for the company were Frances (Fanny) Flora Bond Palmer, Thomas Worth, Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait, Louis Maurer, George Durrie and Charles Parsons.

What type of prints did Currier & Ives produce?

Currier & Ives, who billed themselves as selling "works of art to brighten the home," were known as "the Printmakers to the People." They celebrated the activities, events and everyday life of 19th century Americans. Images included domestic life, historical events, city and country views, religious scenes, scenic wonders, city maps, westward expansion, trains, ships, winter scenes and hunting and fishing. Each print was titled and most were hand-colored by women who worked for the firm. The prints were sold in the New York City shop, distributed through mail-order and were offered by peddlers and by agents working throughout the United States.

What is a lithograph?

A lithograph (from the Greek for "stone drawing") is a print produced from a design drawn onto a limestone surface. The lithographic process relies on the principle that water and grease do not mix. The design is drawn, in mirror image, onto the surface of the limestone with a grease pencil or crayon. The surface of

the drawing is covered with water and then with greasy ink, which adheres to the lines of the drawing. A damp sheet of paper is placed on top of the stone and placed in a special press. The pressure of the press transfers the drawing onto the piece of paper, but in reverse of the original design.

Currier & Ives printed 2 to 3 images every week for 64 years and is believed to have produced more than 7500 different lithographic prints.

How can I determine the date of a Currier & Ives print?

Many Currier & Ives prints were copyrighted through the Library of Congress and the date of copyright, and thus of the print, is printed underneath the image, usually in the middle.

Prints can also be dated based on the address of the firm printed underneath the image.

N. Currier	1 Wall Street	1835-1836
N. Currier	148 Nassau Street	1836-1837
N. Currier	152 Nassau Street and 2 Spruce Street	1838-1856
Currier & Ives	152 Nassau Street and 2 Spruce Street	1857-1865
Currier & Ives	152 Nassau Street and 33 Spruce Street	1866-1872
Currier & Ives	125 Nassau Street and 33 Spruce Street	1872-1874
Currier & Ives	123 Nassau Street and 33 Spruce Street	1874-1877
Currier & Ives	115 Nassau Street and 33 Spruce Street	1877-1894
Currier & Ives	108 Fulton Street and 33 Spruce Street	1894-1896
Currier & Ives	33 Spruce Street	1896-1907

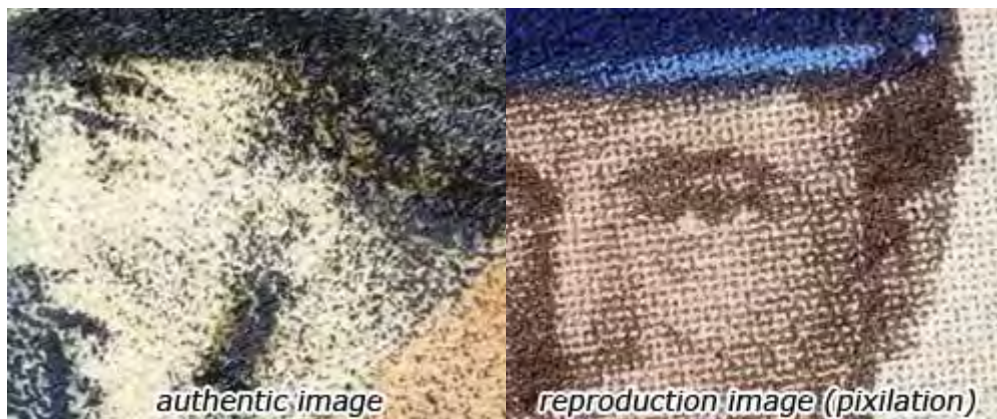
How can I determine if a Currier & Ives print is authentic?

Currier & Ives prints have been reproduced frequently throughout the 20th century, including by the Traveler's Insurance Company in their annual calendar. If the print states under the image that it is reprinted or reproduced from a Currier & Ives print it is not an original image.

The majority of Currier & Ives prints were hand-colored before they were sold. The coloring was often enhanced with gum arabic, a shiny varnish that can be viewed on the surface of the color. The gum arabic can best be seen by holding the print in a raking light or at an angle.



Often, the easiest way to determine if a print is authentic is to examine the image under magnification. A reproduction will exhibit a symmetrical or uniform pattern of dots called pixilation. Irregular dots and solid color often indicate authenticity.



Currier & Ives' prints are divided into three sizes. Small folio prints are approximately 8 by 12 ½ inches, medium folio prints are 10 to 14 inches by 14 to 20 inches and large folio prints are anything over 14 by 20 inches. Prints that do not fall within these size guidelines may not be authentic.

Where can I find out more about Currier & Ives?

The [Springfield Museum of Fine Arts](#) has a resource center devoted to Currier & Ives where visitors can research their print through books, publications and a computer database.

In addition, there are a number of books and Internet websites that provide detailed information on Currier & Ives. Two of the most important books include:

Currier & Ives: An Illustrated Checklist by Frederic A. Conningham is the standard reference on Currier and Ives. The book lists titles and descriptions of prints with a corresponding number. Many collectors and dealers use the Conningham number to identify a specific print.

Currier & Ives: A Catalogue Raisonné by Gale's Research Company is a two volume set which describes more than 7,500 Currier & Ives prints.

[The Currier & Ives Foundation](#) is the leading online reference resource about Currier & Ives.

The American Historical Print Collectors Society (AHPCS) maintains a list of titles not listed in the Conningham or Gale books. They also feature general information on Currier & Ives prints. The AHPCS website address is:

www.ahpcs.org.

Currier & Ives prints are offered for sale through the Old Print Shop in New York City (www.oldprintshop.com) and at the Philadelphia Print Shop (www.philaprintshop.com).