

INTRODUCTION

A Small City with a Far Reach

In 1848 Fitz H. Lane designed and had built a stone house perched on a small hill overlooking Gloucester Harbor, the dormer windows of his studio looking out to sea toward Boston, thirty-three miles to the southwest, and beyond, toward the Caribbean and global ports (fig. 1). He was, for the ensuing two decades, the town's artist, painting shop signs, political banners, and fireboards and designing parade floats for schoolchildren, but he was also painting views of Gloucester, New York, and Baltimore, of Maine and Puerto Rico. His works stand out among nineteenth-century American landscape paintings for their attention to cultural landscape—the harbors, ships, sawmills, hay meadows, and shipyard ways that constituted the quotidian spaces of antebellum economic life. Unlike the wilderness views favored by New York City-based artists, Lane's

paintings comment on the Atlantic seaboard's agriculture, extraction industries, and settlement patterns, and the workers who labored in these places.

What can we learn about the antebellum United States from Lane? From what he painted and how he painted? Who saw, commissioned, bought, and valued his paintings? For what qualities? What can we learn about canon formation in analyzing the history of Lane's reputation? This study addresses a large and diverse set of artworks depicting labor and habitation in an effort to understand how landscapes painted by Lane were understood by those who commissioned, viewed, and bought them. It also looks "downstream" at how cultural and aesthetic priorities in subsequent generations selected the objects of attention (the canon) and the direction



FIGURE 1
Fitz H. Lane, granite house, Gloucester,
Massachusetts, 1848–49. Photo: author, 2017.

of scholarly analysis. The project of this study, in other words, is to call attention to the work of a now-celebrated artist from perspectives rather different from those of previous scholars, who have generally celebrated what they understood to be the “sublime,” “transcendental,” and “luminist” character of some of Lane’s works. Instead, this study investigates how Lane’s body of work as a whole commented on daily life in the nineteenth century and—through historiographic analysis, provenance tracking, and object biography—how we can better understand canon formation within the field of American art.

The methodological assumption behind this study is that an art object constitutes a text about the context that produced it and, further, that its interpretations provide texts about later contexts that valued and revalued it. This investigation employs the conceptual tools of the

cultural historian—thick description, discourse analysis, visual analysis, mobility analysis, and, centrally, deep dives into the archives. This project, above all, aims at a recovery—at reseeing landscapes and their depictions on canvas, insofar as that is possible, with contemporaneous eyes—and it attends to elements of paintings that others dismiss as “incidental detail” but that I believe betray important attitudes toward land, society, history, value, and exchange.¹ The focus is on paintings that emphasize localness and everyday human experience within identifiable settled landscapes, and on the global reach of that localness. It concerns both documentary and nostalgic impulses in nineteenth-century culture; it considers labor, property, money, and economic relations, focusing on the microcosm of coastal New England and the macrocosm of oceanic exchange.

Lane was a Massachusetts artist. This study concerns what he saw in his native Gloucester and in its global marketplace, and what his neighbors saw in his paintings. It is about what Americans for a century after his death declined to see (that is, much value at all in his works), and what Americans in the mid-twentieth century were seeing that spurred them to “discover” and celebrate, buy and exhibit, Lane’s paintings. Art objects provide a particularly eloquent kind of cultural touchstone; their reputation is not just calibrated on an absolute scale of accomplishment but responds to broader, unpredictable streams of culture. Time passes, culture changes; paintings on canvas—if they receive adequate care—remain the same. This “sameness” allows us to measure the flow and eddies of public opinion—the opinions of critics, historians, recipients of bequests and gifts, viewers at exhibitions, and bidders at auctions. Each Lane painting has followed a singular trajectory through time and space, yet together they have traced a pathway from modest local renown, through a profound abyss of oblivion in which even the artist’s name was forgotten and gifts of his works to urban art institutions were quietly regifted elsewhere, to the heights of national praise and recognition his works enjoy today.

The project of this book is to attend to Lane’s depiction of land, water, sky, and ships but also, centrally, to the figures in the paintings, not as scale-giving “staffage” or as actors in the vernacular dramas known as genre painting but as the cocreators of the landscape that the painter records and interprets. These figures are farmers and artisans, mariners and laborers; the paintings are about their work. The artist describes relationships between land and living, between earning and social experience, with canny exactitude. Above all, extractive industries such as lumbering in Maine, fishing in the North Atlantic, and quarrying granite at Cape Ann were, I argue, central to Lane’s vision of the geographies he observed and portrayed for his patrons. This study also investigates the artist’s participation in the emerging culture of looking—that is, tourism and “summering” in coastal New England. Equally haunting these canvases is an acute awareness—on the

part of the artist, his patrons, and his publics—of the threads of commerce that linked Gloucester to Dutch Guiana, Spanish Puerto Rico, and newly acquired Alta California. Unseen in the background of these pictures and in the foreground of the artist’s studio, manual and craft labor were compensated; money changed hands, as the surface of the earth and the surface of the canvas record labor and invite looking.

Since David Huntington’s groundbreaking *Landscapes of Frederic Edwin Church: Vision of an American Era*, much of the scholarly literature on nineteenth-century American landscape painting has addressed this substantial category of art in terms of the cultural work some of these stunning canvases performed in the interest of tales of national self-definition. Privileging paintings that depict “wilderness” and the wonders of nature—Niagara, the Rocky Mountains, Yosemite Valley—the tendency has been to understand the best-known nineteenth-century American landscape paintings as exemplars of the Sublime and as parables of political ambition. Physically brought into the halls of Congress as evidence, specific paintings in this grand manner and mammoth plate photographs participated actively in the creation of public policy, the invention of U.S. national parks as preserves of nature at its most dramatic, and in the development of national ideologies about wildness, wilderness, and conservation.² They also, as Huntington argued, endorsed the rapacious doctrine of Manifest Destiny.³ Most harshly, landscapes in this vein have been labeled “the ‘dream-work’ of imperialism.”⁴ More recently, Rebecca Bedell, Rachael DeLue, and Jennifer Raab have urged interpretations more scientific than political, calling attention to the points of intersection between theories evolving in the sciences and the minutely observed portrayal of rocks, flora, and fauna incorporated into even the most operatic of canvases.⁵ Geology, biology, and period ideas about vision have now been incorporated into our awareness of how ambitious landscape artists thought and worked.

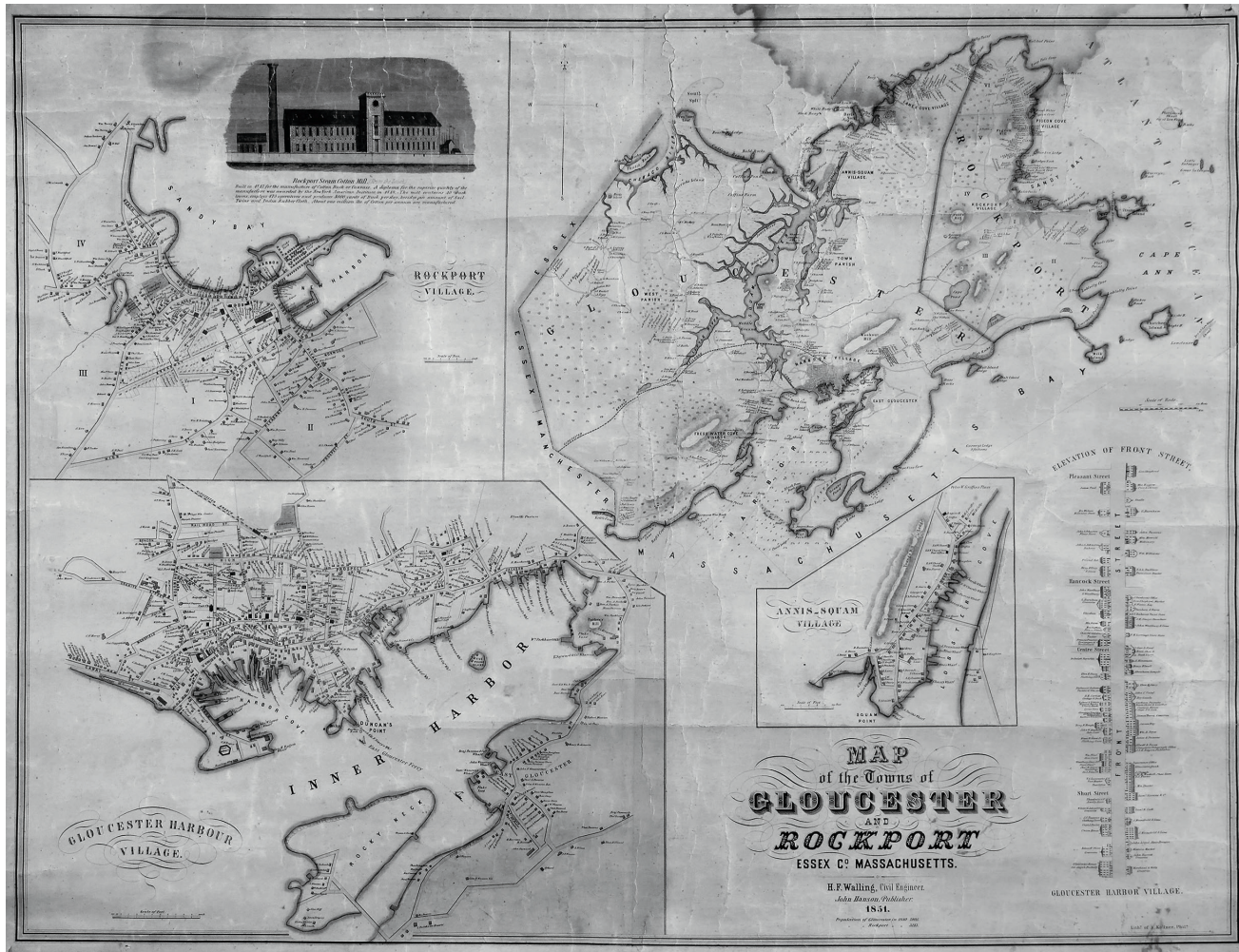
The more modestly scaled paintings focusing on everyday landscapes under uncommon light conditions

by some nineteenth-century artists (including Lane) have been consistently interpreted since the 1960s as evocative of the spiritual thrust of contemporary New England philosophers, especially Ralph Waldo Emerson's transcendentalism.⁶ This study takes another tack in considering the work of Lane, embracing what many scholars eschew as the merely topographical, or the "distracting . . . narrative elements," in his work.⁷ Here I attend closely to the subjects and places depicted (and referenced) in Lane's explicitly *inhabited* landscapes, and to the patrons who supported his career, with an eye to understanding how New Englanders understood their land, their economy, their history, and their links with widely disparate global communities. In this reading, Lane's works depict nature as productive and allied with humans to create a sustainable balanced political economy. As stunning as the grand subjects recorded by Church, Thomas Moran, and other contemporaries, Lane's domesticated landscapes, seascapes, and harborscapes provide insights into issues of patronage, taste, and achievement that revise and temper the lessons of the expansive nature-centered "wilderness" images of Church, Moran, and Albert Bierstadt and potentially turn our assumptions about the relationship between culture and nature, between landscape and ideology, on their head.

David Huntington and his successors have correctly identified the impulse in much nineteenth-century American painting and culture to describe nature as a wilderness on which the young nation might freely inscribe its future: the United States as a virgin land—an unplowed, unfenced, and unpainted land. Insofar as it exhibited evidence of a past, its traces pointed to a geologic or cosmic, not a human, past. But what emerges from a close look at Lane's New England is a picture not only of a land *not* lacking human history (that is, not a "virgin wilderness") but of a land deeply resonant of former uses and human history. While Lane has been interpreted for some decades as a protomodernist, I argue that in his impulse to record landscapes soon to be lost, he is equally an antimodernist. Moreover, his backward glance is toward

a history that incorporates rather than excludes Native Americans as shapers of land and as agents of history.

These are the basic facts: Lane was born in 1804 in Gloucester, Massachusetts, on Cape Ann, and died there in 1865.⁸ The son of a sailmaker, he was christened Nathaniel Rogers Lane. His two brothers were taught by a noted local mathematician, navigator, and surveyor; he was not.⁹ Probably because he was lame (possibly from childhood polio), Lane was trained to the sedentary trade of shoemaker.¹⁰ In 1832, at the age of twenty-eight, he changed his name to Fitz Henry Lane, decided to become a lithographer, and moved to Boston.¹¹ After an apprenticeship at Pendleton's, in 1845 he established his own lithographic firm in partnership with John White Allen Scott. That same year he was in contact with Robert Salmon, a seventy-five-year-old English marine painter working in Boston, as evidenced by the younger painter's inscription on *The Yacht Northern Light in Boston Harbor*: "Painted by F. H. Lane from a sketch by / Salmon / 1845" (Shelburne Museum).¹² By 1849 Lane had acquired an "Esq." honorific, become a proficient painter exhibiting and selling "marine paintings," and moved back to Gloucester, where he designed and built his substantial Gothic Revival granite house, not in the polite part of town, but near the harbor at Duncan's Point, a site surrounded by sail lofts, icehouses, a slaughterhouse, and warehouses in the industrial heart of Gloucester's fish-packing and ship-refurbishing industries (fig. 2).¹³ In a town that at times had three women for every man, he never married, sharing his home with his sister, brother-in-law (a window-sash maker), and their eight children.¹⁴ Most of his paintings are of Gloucester and of the coast of Maine where he spent many summers. A solo practitioner in a town with no exhibition space for art, Lane was not a member of a "school"; indeed, after his early years in Boston, he seems to have had little contact with other artists. Probably about half of Lane's paintings were done speculatively, and about half were commissioned, often from pencil sketches made on site and worked up, in oil on canvas, in his dormered attic



studio.¹⁵ He exhibited at the Boston Athenaeum and the National Academy in New York, and made a decent living, although the highest price he received for a work was \$500 (at a time when Bierstadt, Church, and Moran could command up to \$10,000 for a canvas in New York City).¹⁶ Most of Lane's works appear to have sold for \$100 to \$200. That is nevertheless a substantial sum: about the cost of a saddle horse or the annual wage of a clerk in a Gloucester dry-goods store.¹⁷

This book focuses on Lane during his brief two-decade career as a painter, when he was a mature and locally recognized Gloucester artist, even a household name, as we learn from one diarist in that community of about eight thousand souls:

FIGURE 2
Henry Francis Walling, *Map of the Towns of Gloucester and Rockport, Essex Co. Mass.* (Philadelphia: John Hanson, 1851). A. Koliner, lithographer. Colored lithograph on paper, 34 ½ × 45 in. (87.63 × 114 cm). Cape Ann Museum Library and Archives, Gloucester, Massachusetts.

This week our harbor has presented a beautiful and unusual appearance. More than five hundred vessels at anchor during a storm & as it cleared they all spread their snowy sails and glided off like a vapour. I thought few sights on this earth were more glorious than this. We need not go abroad, across the ocean to admire Nature, & the works of God and man—we can see them all around us if we but

GLOUCESTER HARBOR

MASSACHUSETTS

From a Trigonometrical Survey
under the direction of A.D. BACHE Superintendent of the
SURVEY OF THE COAST OF THE UNITED STATES

Triangulation by C.O. BOUTELLE Assistant U.S.C.S.

Topography by H.L. WHITING Assistant

Hydrography by the party
under the command of Lieut. H.S. STELLWAGEN U.S.N. Asst.

Scale 265000

1855



Visited
H.W. BISHOP, Capt. of Frigate
Asst. in charge of Office.

SAILING DIRECTIONS

Approaching Gloucester from Cape Ann, beware of the Landmark a rock 200 yds. in extent, 1/2 a mile S.E. by E from Thatcher's Id. South Id. There is a channel to the W. 1/2 of a mile wide with 540 fms. but strangers should pass to the Id. not approaching the Id. nearer than one mile. All they bear N.W. With Thatcher's Id. in range bearing N. by E. 1/2 N. 3/4 N. one mile distant steer S.W. by W. 1/2 S. 5/8 W. the rocks will East Pt. Id. bears nearly North and round the Pt. to the N.E. & W. keeping 1/2 a mile from shore to clear East Pt. Ledge and Dog Bar.

To enter S.E. Harbor, bring Ten Pound Island Lt. to bear N.E. by E. (N. 3/4 E.) and run for it when within 1/2 a mile, or halfway between it and Black Bass Pt. steer E.S.E. by E. (S. 61° E.) towards Long Reach to Anchorage in 540 fms. muddy bottom.

To enter Inner Harbor, bring Ten Pound Id. Lt. to bear N.E. and steer S.E. 1/2 S. 1/2 E. passing on the East end of Round Rock Shoal and Ten Pound Id. Ledge when Ten Pound Id. Lt. bears E.S.E. (S. 52° E.) distant 300 yds. steer N.E. by E. (N. 33° E.) into Inner Harbor.

Note: The Courses and Bearings without the brackets are Magnetic, those within are True. The distances are in Statute miles. The Soundings are expressed in feet to 10 feet or within the dotted surface, beyond them in fathoms, and show the depth at mean low water—the plane of reference. The dotted surface beyond low water mark represent the bottom within the respective depths of 6, 12, and 18 feet. The characteristic soundings only, are given on the Map, they are selected from the numerous soundings taken in the survey so as to represent the figure of the bottom.

TIDES

Corrected Establishment	12 ^h 17 ^m
Mean Rise and Fall of Tides	8.9 ft.
Mean do. do. of Spring Tides	10.7 "
Mean do. do. of Neap Tides	7.9 "
Mean Duration of Rise reckoning from the middle of one	07 ^m 25 ^s
Mean do. do. of Fall " " " " " " " "	07 ^m 05 ^s
Mean do. do. of Stand	05 ^m 15 ^s

Abbreviations used in the bottoms of this Map

S. for Sand	bk. for black	off. for soft
M. for Mud	bl. for blue	brk. for broken
G. for Gravel	lt. for light	fine for fine
R. for Rocks	sp. for spray	crs. for coarse
Sh. for Shells		

Note: In the description of Lights, Buoys, black and R. red.
Light Houses, Buoys and Beacons corrected up to Jan. 1875

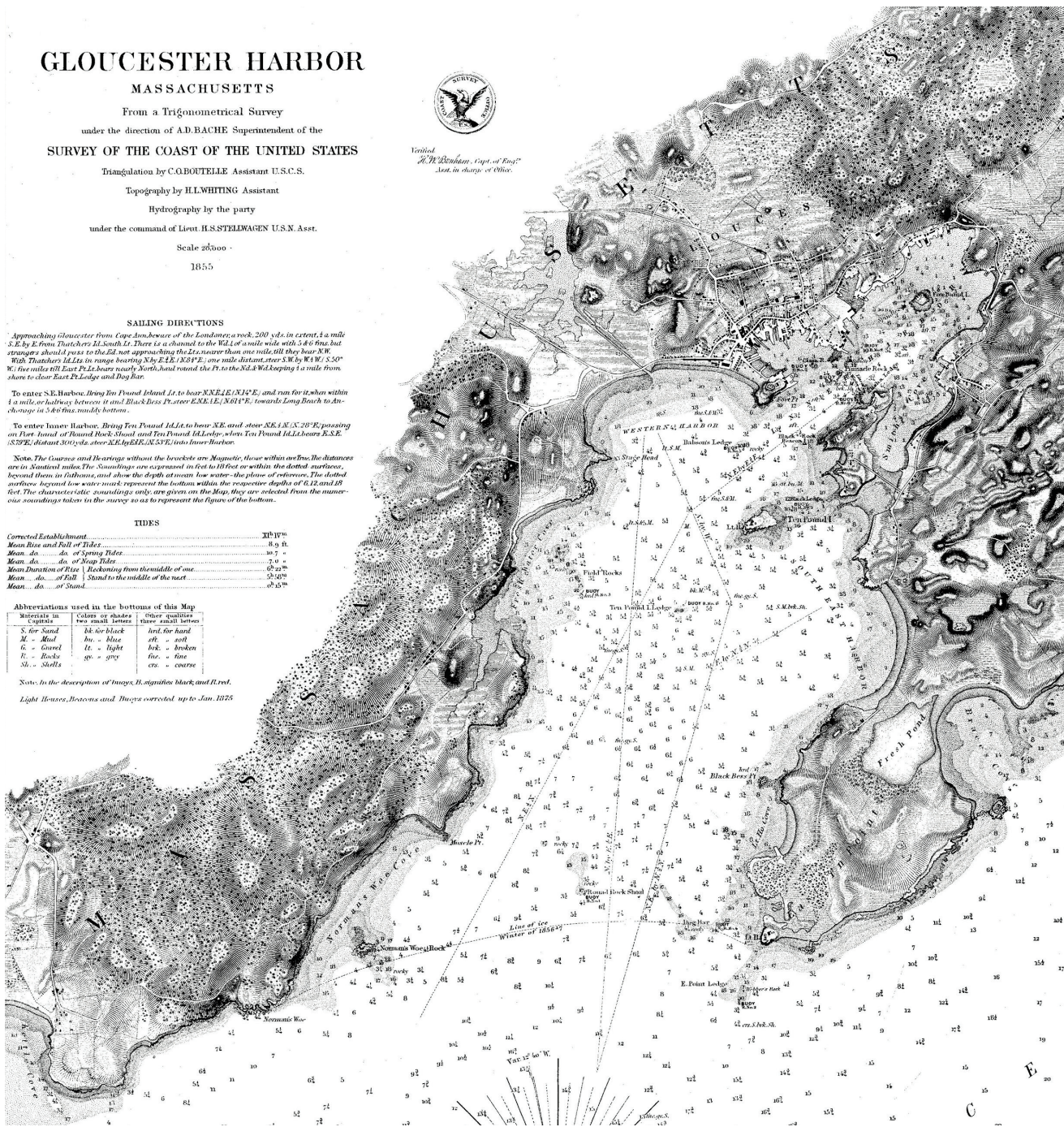


FIGURE 3
A. D. Bache, H. S. Stellwagen, et al., *Survey of the Coast of the United States: Gloucester Harbor, Massachusetts* (1855, updated 1875), detail. Engraving on paper, 30 × 23 in. (76.2 × 58.42 cm). Image: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Office of Coast Survey Historical Map and Chart Collection, <https://historicalcharts.noaa.gov>.

open our eyes. . . . While gathering mosses [at Bass Rocks, on the south shore of Cape Ann], we could not keep our eyes from the broad blue sea covered with myriads of white sails. I wished for the genius of a Raphael or even our own artist Fitz Lane to immortalize this perfect ocean scene.¹⁸

Gloucester, with its commodious southwest-facing harbor (sheltering ships from the winds of New England's frequent devastating storms that blow in from the northeast), was the economic and social hub of Cape Ann and the fishing capital of the nation in those antebellum years (fig. 3). It was a small city with a long reach. As a commentator reported in 1848,

Gloucester . . . with a sterile soil, that will raise nothing but *men*, and being insulated in its position, it has been obliged to depend on its *own* resources and enterprise for support. Its people have, from the earliest settlement, devoted themselves to the fisheries and the pursuits of commerce. . . . This port has become the centre and head-quarters of the fisheries in the Union. . . . Nearly two hundred vessels are owned at this place . . . [and] Gloucester's extensive . . . trade . . . is only exceeded in foreign commerce in the State by Boston and Salem.¹⁹

By 1865, when the town's population numbered about ten thousand, Gloucester's fisheries yielded gross receipts of \$3,863,152 and employed 4,767 hands.²⁰ Thus, the townscape through which Lane and his fellow Gloucesterites daily made their way was busy—with the arrival and departure of ships and schooners, with local commerce victualing and repairing these vessels, and with the movement of goods to and from Calcutta, Odessa, Constantinople, Rio de Janeiro, and Dutch Guiana. In paintings such as *Three-Master on the Gloucester Railway* of 1857, Lane records a moment in which one of these oceanic ships dwarfs the town into which it and a companion schooner temporarily intrude in dry dock for repairs and repainting

(fig. 4). Lane's town was *about* these ships and about what they carried—fish gathered from the North Atlantic, lumber cut on the tributaries of the Penobscot River in Maine, granite quarried in the eastern portion of Cape Ann, and pork, beef, and sheep pastured on the untillable, boulder-strewn fields of the peninsula's interior.²¹ But mostly, Gloucester's schooners, brigs, barks, and ships carried fish, fish caught on the banks off New England and Newfoundland, filleted, salted, dried, and packed in barrels for consumption in Spain, Portugal, and the Caribbean.

Contemporary descriptions of New England connect its busy industriousness, technological ingenuity, and financial power to wind power, water power, and steam power and to the extraction industries they all facilitated:

Our manufacturing interest is beginning to wear a shape that will not bear to be tampered with, or trifled with. New England is alive with machinery—the machinery of water-falls, and congregated seas. The whole seaboard is awake to the privileges which have been secured to her by a charter as old as the skies and as secure as the foundations of the earth, and her whole interior is lighting up with a new spirit—a spirit that will not be rebuked. Her woods are beginning to roar like the sea when it moves with a slow, steady, uninterrupted heave along the whole verge of the Atlantic. Her waters are traveling into new channels—and her woods are vanishing as before a storm. A few years more, and the roughest parts of this rude country will be roaring to the blast of furnaces, and sounding with the din of wheels.²²

Lane's was a noisy, busy town, in a noisy, busy young nation, and the results of that labor, ingenuity, and harnessed power appeared in the fabric of the ships and townscapes he painted and in the vignettes of purposeful economic activity he included in such images as *Gloucester Harbor* of 1847 and *Gloucester Inner Harbor* of 1850 (figs. 5 and 6). According to one Gloucesterite,



FIGURE 4
Fitz H. Lane, *Three-Master on the Gloucester Railway*, 1857. Oil on canvas, 39 ¼ × 59 ¼ in. (99.7 × 150.5 cm). Cape Ann Museum, Gloucester, Massachusetts. Deposited by the City of Gloucester, 1952 (DEP. 202).

the weekday cacophony of the town was “as if noise and confusion had taken everlasting possession of the premises. . . . The hoarse voice of truckmen and waggoners [*sic*] forced by stentorian lungs above the rumbling bass of their wheels,—the discordant song of the stevidore [*sic*], the boisterous mirth of stalworth laborers,—the shouts of seamen and the passionate curses of the profligate,—all blended into one power of sound . . . what a Babel-like confusion.” And yet on Sunday, when “[l]abor is at rest;—contention and strife are quieted; man stifles his passions and bows to the spirit of the commandment,” the town was invested with a “quietude and almost desert

stillness.”²³ On Sunday, and on any fair day away from the harbor, Cape Ann, at the edge of a seemingly boundless sea, presented to the leisured wanderer “the vast and sublime solitude of the sea-shore . . . [where] ‘the waters touch the beach without a murmur, and our spirit seems, as if it were capable of gliding to eternity, unhurt, upon the tranquil surface of the deep.’”²⁴ Lane captured his community in both these moods—busy and noisy with the activities of laboring hands and the beasts and tools that aided them in their work, but also quiet and sublime as an unpeopled desert or an endless oceanic expanse.

Gloucester’s harbor, as a key hub through which the products of New England’s extraction industries passed en route to world markets, was both a small city and a gateway to the globe. With the development of ever more efficient and capacious locally designed and locally built ships, New England’s ports became busy and visible sites



of what its antebellum denizens called “Yankee enterprise.” Reading about New England in the January 16, 1830, edition of the *Gloucester Telegraph*, Lane and his neighbors would have recognized themselves and their economy in this brief but pointed article:

The inhabitants of New England are proverbial for untiring and successful enterprise. They are frightened at no rival—stopped by no obstacle—subdued by no competition. . . .

What people are the most often to be met with on the fishing ground?—The Yankees. What people in the Pacific, in pursuit of oil or furs? The Yankees. Who is he, who barter lumber and onions with the West Indian, beads and red cloth with the Otahetian, rank oil with the Hollander, corn with the Greek, rum, tobacco, snuff, and cast iron muskets with

FIGURE 5
Fitz H. Lane, *Gloucester Harbor*, 1847. Oil on canvas, 28½ × 41 in. (71.8 × 104.1 cm). Cape Ann Museum, Gloucester, Massachusetts. Gift of Estate of Samuel H. Mansfield, 1949 (1332.20).

the Africans, cotton with the English and French, pickled fish with the Russians and Danes, flour with the South Americans, opium with the Chinese, and dry knocks [*sic*] with the Algerian? Why, the Yankee. . . . He is every where if a prospect of gain opens that way, and a few days of hard labor is no task for him, if money is to be found at the close.²⁵

This robust and positive view of their region and their way of being in the world characterized many of Lane’s patrons and, I argue, finds oblique or direct expression in the canvases he painted for them.



FIGURE 6
Fitz H. Lane, *Gloucester Inner Harbor*, 1850. Oil on canvas, 24 × 36 in. (61 × 91.4 cm). The Mariners' Museum, Newport News, Virginia (1946.0830.000001/QO 0710).

The records of Lane's career as an artist are few—he left no diaries or memoirs, no account book listing works and sales. We have only a few letters to and from him, 110 drawings annotated by his friend Joseph L. Stevens Jr. (1823–1908), some brief posthumous accounts by friends and kin, and several newspaper notices about his works and life (many of these clipped and assembled in a scrapbook by an unknown contemporary).²⁶ There are also glimpses of Lane in local diaries—such as that of Annette Babson quoted above—in public records such as tax lists, in the exhibition records of the Boston

Athenaeum and other art venues (see appendix A), and in the account books of Gloucester businesses, which record, for example, his rentals of horse and gig or sleigh from the local livery stable, presumably for sketching excursions around Cape Ann and inland.²⁷ We know he spent early years in Boston, many summers in Maine, and probably, from the evidence of paintings and lithographs by his hand, he also traveled to Providence, Norwich, New York, Baltimore, and possibly Puerto Rico. There are several historic inventories of Lane paintings—indicating title and owner in 1892, 1916, 1938, and 1961—that provide useful information concerning his cohort of patrons and the downstream record of his works (see appendix B). These lists are less helpful than one might hope. The titles of Lane's paintings are notoriously unstable, reflecting many misidentifications and reidentifications of the sites

depicted—one Lane painting has been exhibited, for instance, in the last four decades under eight different names.²⁸ But these lists point to one key fact in the history of Lane’s reputation and in the survival of his works—while Lane’s reputation plummeted within months of his death, one or two individuals in each subsequent generation, convinced of the enduring value of his paintings, drawings, and lithographs, exerted themselves to preserve his memory and his works for a moment of reputation resurrection, which finally arrived in the mid-twentieth century.²⁹ This is a rather scanty archive, one that sends us to the paintings themselves to find out about the artist, and to a whole host of other primary sources to learn about his social, economic, and artistic context.

There are probably several hundred extant Lane paintings—a partial but very useful online catalogue raisonné of his work has been undertaken by the Cape Ann Museum.³⁰ Somewhat confusing the picture of determining Lane’s oeuvre, there are both signed and not-yet-identified or -attributed copies executed by his students and by contemporary copyists. These include Mary B. Mellen, Salisbury Tuckerman, Harriet Mason, Ada C. Bowles, William Bradford, Jerome Elwell, F. L. Palmer, and Henry J. Pierce; and he is known to have made copies of his own works.³¹ Probably about half Lane’s extant paintings are signed on the face—sometimes in vermilion paint in the lower right corner, sometimes on the back of a stretcher; but occasionally his signature appears slyly within the fiction of the image—as in *Salem Harbor* (MFA; see fig. 34).³² Other paintings were signed (and sometimes the locale named) on the reverse, such as *View of Coffin’s Beach* (MFA), but many have been relined and these data lost.³³ Of the signed paintings, about half are also dated, and these provide signposts to specific moments in Lane’s career. The works that form the basis of the analysis and discussion here are signed by Lane or appear to be well provenanced to his hand. This book is not a life-and-works account of this artist’s career, focusing on the artist’s “influences,” “development,” and

“achievement.” Rather, it looks closely at singular works and at groups of works that speak to central concerns for those living in the Gloucester and New England of antebellum America and, to a lesser extent, a century later, in Cold War America.

The book as a whole considers not only the production and reception of Lane’s paintings but also, as noted above, the downstream life of his oeuvre and of his reputation. It positions the paintings as actors instructing generations of viewers in how to see Gloucester and coastal Maine, commerce and labor, extraction industries and summer leisure. Through the eloquent lens of Lane’s work, it investigates the roles that memory, time, profit, a sense of local community, and global trade played in antebellum culture. And it also looks at the different concerns of subsequent generations.

What this book emphasizes is not Lane’s status as a “Luminist” or his expertise in marine matters but rather the way Lane, unlike any other painter of his day, painted the social economy that revolved around ships, such as that pictured in *Lumber Schooners at Evening on Penobscot Bay* (fig. 7). It attends to what these ships and boats are carrying, to what this working landscape is *doing*. This is a quiet painting about light and an accurate painting about rigging, but it is also a painting about the movement of goods (in this case, lumber) from one place to another, a painting whose convincing magic is achieved through a wonderful rendering of many details and overall mood.

Like the work of mid-nineteenth-century poets of the quotidian and the common such as Emily Dickinson, these paintings are about nonevents, everyday things, things that happen over and over. Lane depicts Time extracted from History—that is, from the notable chronicle of unique events, Important events. He paints the cycles of the day (dawn, noon, dusk), the cycles of the tides, and the cycle of the seasons. In such works as *Lumber Schooners* Lane paints, not the spectacle of “untouched” Nature in the wilderness or the awesome power of unique topographical features such as Niagara Falls, but rather the small details



FIGURE 7
Fitz H. Lane, *Lumber Schooners at Evening on Penobscot Bay*, 1863. Oil on canvas, 24 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 38 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (62.5 × 96.8 cm). National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Francis W. Hatch Sr. (1980.29.1).

that make the cultural geography of the New England coast work as economic geography.

In a rather different but equally characteristic canvas, *View of Gloucester from "Brookbank," the Sawyer Homestead*, one little sloop awaits a higher tide, while another nudges toward a stone pier that marks the point of marine contact between this homestead and the distant town of Gloucester, the larger community with which this farm aligns itself (fig. 8). The social geography of this place, "Brookbank," is interdependent with the economic geography of that place, Gloucester, seen as a line of white buildings and churches in the center distance. In the foreground a complicated but precise assembly of stone walls

and rail and picket fencing marks units of agricultural land use. This is a pastoral household—a single cow represents milk, butter, cheese, meat, and hides. The amplitude of rocks and absence of row crops suggest that it is a grazing economy linked to a ready nearby market that keeps a sturdy barn and rolling meadowlands in tidy shape. The key implied ingredients are human labor and ingenuity on the one hand, and linkage to larger communities and economies on the other. Indeed, the owner of "Brookbank" at Sawyer's Hill, on the edge of Freshwater Cove on the western arm of Gloucester Harbor, could commission such a canvas just because he was so well plugged into the local economy.

Gloucester was Lane's primary subject: Ten Pound Island, Dolliver's Neck, Brace's Rock, Norman's Woe, and here Freshwater Cove and Sawyer's Hill—these names are familiar to those who know Lane's work. He painted these sites repeatedly, usually for Gloucester patrons,



sometimes for former Gloucesterites who had established themselves and their businesses elsewhere, in Boston and New York. Lane's principal patron was the son of the surveyor John Mason, who drew a splendid map of Cape Ann and had it printed by Senefelder Lithographic Co. in Boston the year before Lane went to work for that firm to learn the practice of lithography (fig. 9). Here the sheltering coves and harbors, the interior roadways and mills, the sites of wrecks and of summer picnics so familiar to Lane and his patrons are carefully described.

How about Lane himself, how cosmopolitan were his horizons? I am proposing that Lane, like his fellow coastal New Englanders, acted locally but thought globally. He was deeply aware of the webs of money, goods, technology, and mutual interest that bound the farm and the ship to the town, and even the smallest American towns to the most distant ports, in the early nineteenth century. He was a painter of common events but not of

FIGURE 8

Fitz H. Lane, *View of Gloucester from "Brookbank," the Sawyer Homestead*, n.d. Oil on canvas, 18 × 30 3/4 in. (45.7 × 76.7 cm). Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh. Acquired through the generosity of the Sarah Mellon Scaife Family (77.5). Photo © 2017 Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh.

isolated instances. Everything in his canvases suggests connection. The universe of tiny unhistoric events Lane paints is a natural world—often, but not always, a benign and hospitable world—in which people have deposited objects of use. Lane—the son of a sailmaker, trained as a shoemaker, sharing his home with his window-sash-maker brother-in-law—was embedded in an artisanal view of his world. If there exists a painter who had what James Elkins has called “an ‘unalienated, insider’s apprehension of the land’ [and] . . . an everyday experience of landscape,” it was Lane.³⁴ And what he apprehended and portrayed was what J. B. Jackson has called “a coherent



FIGURE 9
John Mason, *Map of Gloucester, Cape Ann* (Senefelder Lithographic Co., Boston, 1831). Lithograph on paper, 20½ × 27½ in. (51 × 70 cm). Sold by W. E. P. Rogers, Gloucester. Courtesy of Harvard Map Collection.

workable landscape [that] evolves where there is a coherent definition of man's relation to the world and to his fellow men.²³⁵

The objects Lane painted—buildings, fences, ships—were engineered and designed, but not deliberately aestheticized. These are frank, sturdy, geometric structures portrayed in a brushless, seemingly clinical hand. And yet they appear to record two things beyond their straightforward forms. First, they seem vibrant with the artist's visual curiosity; and second, they seem to suggest the record of

old places, places inhabited by European Americans for centuries before Lane made his pictorial records.

The facts of daily life recorded in *Gloucester Harbor* of 1852—fishermen setting nets, steeples and sails marking aspirations and ventures, brigs and schooners moving goods and people, the intractable geometry of the fort sitting on a grassy promontory in the middle distance—add up to more than the sum of their parts (fig. 10). Townscapes such as this or farmscapes such as “*Brookbank*” are not the paintings by Lane that appear in twentieth- and twenty-first-century texts on nineteenth-century American painting or that fetch the highest prices on today's market. Those tend to be the emptier canvases, like *Lumber Schooners* (fig. 7), in which ocean and sky predominate, in which there are few reminders of the domestic or



the agricultural, just suggestions of human daring and the haunting depths of the elements. The harborscapes seem too tied to individual facts, to ordinary, unmythic dimensions of daily life for most art historians. But I propose that in these townscape, farmscape, and harborscape paintings by Lane (which I find central to his project), and in the relationships between these canvases and the emptier works, the two kinds considered together, we see, above all, this: a record of relationships between land, individual labor, and broader economic and temporal communities.

Painting the Inhabited Landscape comprises eight chapters; the first, “Reputation,” discusses the arc of Lane’s self-fashioning as a painter. The second, “Value,” is a case study in canon formation. It tracks and analyzes the dramatic reversals in Lane’s reputation after his death in 1865 as it plummeted to a nadir of nothingness and then rose—in response to events in American cultural history, including the ascent of modernism and the search for its roots in an American past—to its current extraordinary

FIGURE 10
Fitz H. Lane, *Gloucester Harbor*, 1852. Oil on canvas, 28 × 48½ in. (71.1 × 123.2 cm). Commissioned by Sidney Mason. Cape Ann Museum, Gloucester, Massachusetts. Deposited by the City of Gloucester, 1952; gift to the City from Cassie Mason Myers Julian-James, 1913 (DEP. 200).

heights. Succeeding chapters discuss key facets of antebellum America as Lane commented on them in singular paintings or in clusters of related paintings.

“Canvas” investigates Lane’s complex personal identity, circling around issues of naming, renaming, and misnaming; Lane’s father’s canvas-based trade as a crafter of sails for Gloucester’s ships; Lane’s choices of canvas and his choices of signatures; and the role of canvas factories in Gloucester’s local economy. How did this son of a sailmaker, who knew how to trim sails and make shoes, understand his vocation as a painter? Did he see himself as a poet (a keen observer), a craftsman, or an artist in the great Western tradition of Raphael (as invoked by one contemporary noted above)?

“Fish” foregrounds Gloucester’s principal industry—the extraction of cod, mackerel, halibut, pollock, and hake from the North Atlantic. Lane models fishing in the foreground of *Gloucester Harbor* of 1852, commissioned by Sidney Mason, son of the mapmaker, and Lane’s major patron (fig. 10). Some of Gloucester’s fish was sold and consumed fresh, but most was salted, dried, packed in barrels, and exported. In Lane’s early lithograph *View of the Town of Gloucester*, he foregrounds the long tables on which the fish were dried in one of the town’s many flake yards (fig. 11). Lane’s *Gloucester Harbor* includes, on the far left, a portrait of Mason’s Pavilion Hotel, the town’s first resort hotel, yoking together the long-established fish economy with New England’s nascent economy, figured in the foreground, of touring, summering, and looking.

“Lumber” inquires into the nature of Maine’s lumbering industry and into its distant markets. By 1850, when Lane was making annual painting trips to the state, the yearly timber crop of Maine was worth almost six million dollars.³⁶ His seemingly quiet *Lumber Schooners at Evening on Penobscot Bay* depicts one moment in the career of one of hundreds of coasters that carried this profitable crop south: to Gloucester, Boston, Charleston, the West Indies, even Australia. Implicit in all Lane’s paintings are the artisanal acts and know-how that used the lumber temporarily afloat in *Lumber Schooners* to construct the houses, barrels, and barns of antebellum America (fig. 7). One feels here and elsewhere in his work the artist’s profound respect for the designers of ships, the riggers of spars, but also the loaders of wood, the builders of homes, and the crafters of barrels and buckets. This is a poetic image, but it is also an image of labor and capital at work. This chapter also considers traces in Lane’s paintings of seventeenth-century conflicts in Maine between Native Americans and settlers from Massachusetts, including Lane’s ancestors.

The primary fact in the life, culture, and economy in antebellum New England is its granitic substrate, the focus of chapter 6, “Granite.” Providing building material, discouraging row-crop farming, and creating the region’s primary marine hazard, granite is a major subject in Lane’s

work, and the material of which he—somewhat eccentrically—constructed his home (fig. 1).

The “Travelers” chapters (7 and 8) focus on four distant locales linked to Gloucester, important to Lane’s patrons and, in some cases, directly referenced in the artist’s paintings: Surinam, California, China, and Puerto Rico. Pointing out the square-rigged three-masted ship on the right in Lane’s 1852 *Gloucester Harbor*, for instance, the local newspaper some years later described these vessels as “Surinamers . . . some [of] the large fleet that at that time was engaged in a lucrative business with Dutch Guiana, bringing cargoes of sugar, molasses and other tropical goods from that country and taking out cargoes of dried fish and other New England products” (fig. 10).³⁷ Much of the fish Gloucesterites harvested from the North Atlantic was exported to Surinam to provide protein for the slaves whose labor lay at the base of this profitable economy. California, similarly, was a prominent but abstract presence in Gloucester from 1848, when the names of some of the ships that Lane painted, such as the *Golden State*, marked a major disruptive undercurrent in the culture and pointed to the challenge that California gold leveled at New Englanders, their shipping, their economy, their understanding of the relation between land and labor, and their place in history. In a certain light Lane’s work can be seen as an anchor against the seductive siren song of the West, its placer nuggets luring young men into severing their tethers to the lifeways of their fathers. Similarly, distant China was the source of Lane patron Robert Bennet Forbes’s considerable wealth, and he engaged the artist to portray vessels he designed and had built to engage in the China trade, as well as to portray his humanitarian mission to Ireland and to illustrate his tracts on naval architecture.

Puerto Rico was a key locale for Lane’s primary patron, Sidney Mason, a Gloucesterite who left the town as a twelve-year-old to be trained in a Boston counting house. By his early twenties he owned a plantation in Puerto Rico and was serving as the first U.S. consul there. He married into the local Creole business aristocracy and

employed Edward Bliss Emerson, one of Ralph Waldo Emerson's brothers, in his San Juan counting house. In 1840 Mason moved to New York City, where he started one of the first horsecar rail lines, built the first marble mansion on Fifth Avenue, and filled it with paintings, including many by Lane, and elaborate mahogany furniture made from trees on his Puerto Rico plantation. He rode his horse daily, often with the historian George Bancroft and with Frederick Law Olmsted, observing the construction of Central Park.³⁸ Lane paintings would have served as instruments of memory, shorthand metaphors to mentally transport Mason and family members to whole clusters of associations concerning personal, familial, and national history. The narratives prompted by these paintings make clear that interpretations of nineteenth-century American art need to expand to encompass a much more cosmopolitan view of the role these works played in the complex lives of those who commissioned them. These two chapters also consider the provenance of some of Lane's canvases painted for these peripatetic patrons in their descent to the present, picking up on the central concerns of the opening chapters: reputation, canon formation, and object biography.

The fish, lobster, granite, and lumber Lane painted were netted, trapped, quarried, and cut with methodical skill, moved to local and distant markets (largely by ships and boats), and garnered sufficient profit to allow most of these Yankees to make a living, and some of them to make a killing. Lane's was a world not of stillness but of movement. His paintings do not, I argue, celebrate a "conflict between civilization and wilderness," as some critics allege, but rather offer buoyant vignettes of the complex system that created things (ships, buildings, objects of use) from the boom-time extractive industries of antebellum New England: fish, granite, timber.³⁹ Nor does this book position landscape painting in the antebellum United States as an account of "uniqueness, purity and difference from the European norm," which some believe might still be a dominant paradigm in the field.⁴⁰ While Lane's images appear to celebrate localness, they in fact

tell a story about the well-articulated segments of a much larger, very human global marketplace of ideas, art, and goods. Lane's paintings, I would propose, are not empty canvases full of silence but busy seascapes, landscapes, and townscapes full of purposeful activity tied to thousands of other acts of purposeful, useful, knowledgeable, profitable activity. They are about points of intersection between globally understood social and ecological systems.

And yet many of Lane's works, with their sunset tones and chromatic skies, are contemplative, cool in tone. They do not show axes biting into majestic trees clear-cut forests messy with slash, gasping, thrashing fish en route to a profitable market, or desperate attempts at rescue when wrecks like the prototype of Longfellow's *Hesperus* came to pieces on Cape Ann. Violence and destruction are muted. The viewer's focus is directed toward human know-how and finished product. Lane, in such iconic works as *Lumber Schooners*, does not show violence to the forest because he does not see it. Mobile only with crutches, Lane saw what one could from a road, a porch, a dormer window, the deck of a ship. Records of his attempts to join friends hiking inland are full of their alternating patience and exasperation at his disability.⁴¹ Lane was not Henry David Thoreau or Frederick Church, heading off into the wilderness following the faint trails of trappers and Native Americans, pausing to muse at the abandoned remnants of a remote logging camp. The violence in the forest was not his quest. Lane wanted to see (and record) points of intersection, those sites where one kind of labor interfaced with another, where goods in one state were transformed into another: the sawmill, the harbor, the boatyard. And his visual curiosity was unusually democratic—it took in everything and followed few conventions, satisfied few rules. In many of his images sky and water reflect each other in rhyming ombré expanses of glowing air and polished water, suggesting expansiveness and a mood of well-being. But it is the particularized forms of rocks, sails, trees, lighthouses, homes, and silhouetted figures that read as linked elements in a

narrative of place—different, disparate in form and color and distance, but all parts of a single local (and extralocal) ecology and economy.

Lane was not, of course, a boatman, lumberman, mill operator, lobster fisherman, or builder. He was a painter—a particularly smart painter. What he was particularly shrewd in perceiving was the fact that his paintings, with their faintly poignant tone of a record of a world about to be lost, also signaled the arrival of a new economy in Penobscot and Gloucester based not on doing but on seeing, based, in other words, on city people summering, touring, looking; people doing, above all, what the artist did—looking intently. The beachfront Pavilion Hotel prominently bracketing Lane's *Gloucester Harbor* on the left marks the establishment of rail lines, followed almost immediately by the establishment of vacation hotels and boarding houses in antebellum Gloucester and Maine. Lane settled in Gloucester just after the arrival of the rail line, and a year before the building of this, Gloucester's first tourist hotel, by Sidney Mason; and on his first trip to Maine, he sailed into Somes Sound on Mount Desert Island about an hour after the first steamboat arrived.⁴² With the help of railroads, scheduled packet boats, and well-equipped hotels, urban visitors began summering in areas that locals had regarded as unproductive wastelands: mountains and beaches. They went there for healthful cool air, and they went there for the view. These are the opening years of vacation culture as we know it. The urbanites hiked, they sailed small boats, and they toured through areas they believed to be beautiful. And touring on site was, as the nineteenth century progressed, increasingly replicated in touring by proxy. Books, prints, journal articles, stereoscope views, and paintings, available to an ever-widening public, enabled prospective tourists, armchair tourists, and nostalgic former tourists to conjure views from distant sites. In the case of several of Lane's patrons, it appears that the appeal of his paintings lay in their clear mapping of social and physical relationships that implied seemingly uncomplicated artisanal, pastoral, and maritime geographies of harmony and wholeness

suitable to hang in their decidedly more complicated urban homes in Boston and New York.

Overall, I see Lane as an artist who made paintings of the life and the cultural geography around him, as a native of New England who understood, recorded, and analyzed its prosperity and its connectedness with the wider world. But Lane and his generation also had an eye on something else, and that is the past. Repeatedly, he painted scenes and objects reminiscent of pasts long gone. If Pavilion Hotel tourism brackets the town on one side in Lane's *Gloucester Harbor*, the remains of a Revolutionary War fort bracket it on the other (fig. 10). Gloucester's Old Fort, last active in the War of 1812, sat in the middle of Gloucester's harbor and sits in the middle of many of Lane's paintings as a reminder of the stratigraphy of human existence, as a reminder that each layer, each lifetime, owes its being to predecessors only dimly known and rarely acknowledged.⁴³ Behind these "quiet" harbor scenes of Gloucester and Maine lie memories of wars, hostility, violence, and death. Here the idea of connection and intersecting paths involves the fourth dimension: time. That there is a retrospective, even antiquarian thread in Lane's production is corroborated by his design for his own house. It is exceptional in its context: of granite, adorned with seven gables on the exterior and Gothic vaults on the interior, it sticks out from the vernacular orthogonal streetscape of Gloucester, a singularity among the town's structures. Lane's was the first generation seriously to cast an historical eye over the settled landscape as well as an aesthetic eye over the natural landscape. That it was also the first generation to place a premium on the sequestered silent soul growing in self-awareness, on the one hand, and in awareness of the unity and linkage of all things, on the other, impacted the way Lane painted and the way his contemporaries read his works.

What, then, is Lane's message? Simply that close looking at the small ordinary facts of daily life can teach the observant soul three things: that such looking will be rewarded by epiphanies of beauty and a sense of oneness with the natural and social world; that such looking at

even the plainest factoids of an ordinary village will give one a sense of the oneness of social and economic life, a deep sense that each visual fact is part of a complex international social, material, and economic web; and that such looking can and should be captured and the moment frozen, the time and place fixed in amber, so that it will coexist with all future time. The painting, then, above all, is a symptom of that desire to hold a moment of vision.