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University of Delaware (Winterthur Program), M.A., 1973 Fine Arts

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ALEXANDER ANDERSON AND AMERICAN WOOD ENGRAVING

Ву

Malcolm S. Smith

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Early American Culture.

May, 1973

ALEXANDER ANDERSON AND AMERICAN WOOD ENGRAVING

Ву

Malcolm S. Smith

Approved:	Leone 113 Jahren
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Approved:	The Coordinator of the Winterthur Program
Approved:	Dean of the College of Graduate Studies

Preface

Wood engraving is an all but forgotten art, its particular importance and merits obscured by the introduction of photography and high speed photogravure printing. The United States today is inundated with seemingly unlimited quantities of printed matter; a variety of multi-color photographic reproductions are met with daily. Although this vast outpouring of material includes valuable historical analyses and interpretations, its very existence makes the attitudes and outlook of the previous century more difficult to comprehend. Media saturation is a phenomenon of more recent times; in the early nineteenth century the possibilities of illustrated publications were just beginning to be apparent.

This thesis is a study of the nineteenth century. It is an attempt to understand more of that period by examining the artistic career and influence of Alexander Anderson, the first documented practitioner of wood engraving in the United States. Although now relegated to footnotes in histories of American art, Anderson was seen by his contemporaries as a major force in the development of American culture and civilization. An understanding of why he was so highly regarded in his own time will perhaps lead to a more complete picture of the nineteenth century. Contemporary heroes can perhaps suggest new insights into the ideals of an earlier time.

Anderson's career involves two major issues in American art history. The first concerns the problems confronting an aspiring artist during the early years of the Republic. What limitations and restrictions were present? What were the possible resources which might fruitfully be employed? Were chances

for success, commercial or otherwise, greater in one field of endeavor than another? Since Anderson was essentially self-taught, where did he acquire his technical and stylistic information, and how available was it? His struggles to learn and his subsequent success suggest the difficulties and potential resources for beginning artists shortly after the American Revolution.

The second issue is the role of wood engraving during the nineteenth century. Why was it commercially successful? What social importance did men of the period attach to the technique? Why was it praised as a fundamental element in the advance of civilization, and why did it decline? Perhaps more than that of any other artist, Anderson's career coincided with the history of American wood engraving. Through a study of his life, the America of the nineteenth century can be seen a little more clearly.

In writing a paper of this kind, assistance is always received. I was fortunate to find that these offers of aid and encouragement were given in the best spirit of interest and concern. My first recognition must be to my advisor, Professor George B. Tatum. His advice and suggestions have been invaluable, while his command of language has proved both fascinating and demanding. He has saved me from numerous errors, but in the end saw to it that I bore the responsibility for the discovery and development of the ideas in this thesis. Miss Elizabeth E. Roth, Keeper of Prints, New York Public Library, and her assistant Mrs. Roberta Fong suffered with me through a long hot July. Their helpfulness and suggestions were matched only by the mid-afternoon heat of the city. Frederick Bauer, Librarian, the American Antiquarian Society, continued his previous friendship with me and offered needed encouragement as well as assistance. Miss E. McSherry Fowble of the Winterthur Museum gave endlessly of her time that I might have some knowledge of the graphic arts, and also offered valuable suggestions. Most of all, my wife Lisa continuously offered encouragement, criticism, and confidence. She is one of those gifted people who can make even the darkest moments seem brighter.

I am also grateful to the Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum for its support during the research and writing of this thesis. Beyond this assistance, the holdings of the Museum's library have been invaluable in providing material essential to my investigation.

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. . . when the sluggard intellect of this continent will look from under its iron lids and fill the postponed expectation of the world with something better than the exertions of mechanical skill.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

It is therefore not true to assert that men living in democratic times are naturally indifferent to science, literature and the arts; only it must be acknowledged that they cultivate them after their own fashion and bring to the task their own peculiar qualifications and deficiencies.

Alexis de Tocqueville

Chapter I

The Making of an Artist

By the end of the eighteenth century, a distinctive artistic tradition had not yet been established in America. The most promising minds went to England and the Continent, often never to return. Men with lesser abilities, or lesser means, usually worked in weak imitation of European styles, their art ignored by the world and by many of their countrymen. The career of Alexander Anderson (1775–1870) typifies the problems which confronted the hopeful artists of his period, while his extraordinary success as an engraver makes him unique in the early history of American art.

Anderson's work exceeds ten thousand separate engravings, and was used to illustrate more than six hundred and ninety books. He achieved what no American artist had done before: he reached a mass audience. The United States was the first democratic nation in modern history; Alexander Anderson was the first artist to have his material widely distributed to this new republican populace. The weaknesses and possibilities of the arts in the eighteenth century were combined with the democratic optimism of the nineteenth; the result was the first successful engraver in the New World.

The notion of democracy was new to most of the world in the nineteenth century. European visitors made observations of this new idea, with opinions that ranged from the most optimistic to dire warnings for the future. Their comments extended from politics to religion, and occasionally included remarks on the role of the arts in a democratic society. Alexis de Tocqueville, among the most

perceptive of the foreign visitors, gave considerable thought to the cultivation of the arts in America:

It would be to waste the time of my readers and my own if I strove to demonstrate how the general mediocrity of fortunes, the absence of superfluous wealth, the universal desire for comfort, and the constant efforts by which everyone attempts to procure it make the taste for the useful predominate over the love of the beautiful in the heart of man. Democratic nations, among whom all these things exist, will therefore cultivate the arts that serve to render life easy in preference to those whose object is to adorn it. They will habitually prefer the useful to the beautiful, and they will require that the beautiful should be useful. . . . Among a democratic population all the intellectual faculties of the workman are directed to these two objects: he strives to invent methods that may enable him not only to work better, but more quickly and more cheaply; or if he cannot succeed in that, to diminish the intrinsic quality of the thing he makes, without rendering it wholly unfit for the use for which it is intended.²

Tocqueville's comments summarized the problems for a democratic art. In his view, Americans "will require that the beautiful should be useful;" the democratic artist "strives to invent methods that may enable him not only to work better, but more quickly and more cheaply." These limitations also suggested possible strengths. If an art form could be developed which would in fact combine the beautiful with the useful, and which could be made available rapidly and at little expense, then success might be possible and art made available to a democratic nation. The development and widespread dissemination of such a means of artistic expression was the principal achievement of Alexander Anderson. He introduced the technique of wood engraving as an art form, providing attractive illustrations in large quantity. His career coincided with the rapid development of American publishing, and his engraving technique permitted wide distribution of illustrated works to a growing and enthusiastic audience. His work was useful, inexpensive, and could be rapidly produced in the conventional printing presses then available. He was the first artist in the United States to produce works of art on a large-scale, popular basis.

The artistic climate in which Anderson developed his engraving technique was not rich with possibilities. He was born in 1775, sixteen years after

Benjamin West had departed for Europe, and one year after John Singleton Copley had left on a similar journey. Neither artist was ever to return to the New World. Gilbert Stuart did not permanently leave England for America until eighteen years later, and Thomas Sully had two European trips before him. An adequate apprenticeship in the arts did not exist in America, while sources for study were few and primarily in private hands. Compounded with this was the lack of an audience for artistic innovations. Copley discontentedly documented this attitude in an unaddressed draft of a letter:

A taste of painting is too much wanting in Boston to afford any kind of help; and was it not for preserving the resemblances of particular persons, painting would not be known in the place. The people generally regard it as no more than any other useful trade, as they sometimes term it, like that of carpenter, tailor, or shoemaker, not as one of the most noble arts in the world, which is not a little mortifying to me. While the arts are so regarded, I can hope for nothing either to encourage or assist me in my studies but what I receive from a thousand leagues distance, and be my improvements what they will, I shall not be benefited by them in this country, neither in point of fortune or fame.³

The disadvantages under which other artists labored, or from which they withdrew, also weighed on Anderson. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries did not offer an hospitable artistic environment. But two advantages were present in the graphic arts. Eighteenth century publications did offer basic technical instructions, while additional books contained engraved plates as direct examples of the medium in which the engraver worked. These were at best second-hand reports of paintings, but they were original prints. Unlike critists in other media, a beginning engraver could have frequent and direct contact with finished artistic productions. There was no intermediary between the student and the work he wished to examine. A painter would primarily study paintings through the secondary medium of graphics, with little direct contact with color. An engraver studied directly the prints whose technique he hoped to learn.

In addition, there was an audience for illustrated books; but in order to illustrate a large edition inexpensively, a new technique had to be devised to replace the copper plate. The story of Anderson's success lies in his use of these

unique advantages and in the importance which his contemporaries attached to illustrated materials. Anderson was able to create works of art, which his countrymen wanted, and in the value of which they believed.

Several sources exist which concern Anderson's early life and career. He kept a Diary from January, 1793 to June, 1794⁴; this document is a valuable source for all aspects of New York life for the period, as well as the best available portrait of the man himself. In addition, many of his letters have survived, together with an autobiographical sketch written in 1847.⁵ This latter source treats aspects of his life which do not appear in the Diary. Unfortunately, some incidents are recorded in both, with contradictions. Anderson's memory apparently dimmed over the course of half a century, a regrettable but understandable development. For this reason, whenever possible, the Diary will be used in preference to the 1847 autobiography in tracing the development of his career. Finally, the early biography of Anderson by Benson J. Lossing is an important source. As a successful practitioner of the art of wood engraving, Lossing was eager to praise the man who had established the technique in America. In his biography he quotes several letters which cannot now be located and includes his recollections of comments made by Anderson during their long friendship. Lossing is also the source from which most later writers on Anderson took their material. But Lossing was apparently unaware of Anderson's Diary, and contradictions with the more contemporary document do appear. And again, the recollections which Anderson recounted to Lossing may suffer from an old man's failing memory. Despite the shortcomings of these sources, the formative influences on Anderson can be detailed with a high degree of certainty.

Anderson's father was a Scottish immigrant, whose combination of republican views and trade of printer in New York City soon caused displeasure among the British during the Revolutionary War. The family hastily removed to Connecticut, taking what equipment could be salvaged from the printing shop.⁷ This turn of fortune had a lasting effect on the family, and finances were to be a repeated warry throughout the years covered by Anderson's Diary. When the

young Anderson developed an interest in the study of art, both he and his father thought first of placing him in a remunerative trade. In the late eighteenth century a living could not be made by the practice of engraving.

The father's occupation was to have an important effect on Anderson. Simply by living near the presses, the son would gain a familiarity with the relief process of printing as well as an understanding of inking, press operations, and paper. The adoption of relief printing to the engraved wood block was to be the basis of Anderson's ultimate success, and for this his early involvement with the printing trade provided a basic knowledge.

Occasional works of graphic art were available in the elder Anderson's shop. In an undated letter to Lossing, Anderson discussed the effect of those prints on his youthful ambitions:

I recollect being allowed an occasional peep at a considerable pile of prints, such as were issued from the London shops, among which were Hogarth's illustrations of the Idle and Industrious Apprentices, which made a strong impression on my mind. These prints determined my destiny. §

That Anderson was familiar with Hogarth is further documented by a Diary entry of January, 1794 in which he mentions that a Mr. Davis loaned him a copy of Hogarth on Beauty.⁹

During his early association with prints, Anderson clearly became familiar with the work of William Hogarth (1697-1764), best known for his satiric representations of life in the eighteenth century. Hogarth used his series of prints to teach by example, trusting that pictorial representations would instruct as well as entertain. Solid, middle-class virtues were portrayed, as well as the certain ruin which would befall those who failed to be guided by them. Hogarth's engraving techniques were not to be of great importance to Anderson; but he would make use of the didactic approach which was essential to Hogarius work.

Anderson's familiarity with the printing process and his early fascination with engravings encouraged him to make attempts on his own. In later life he recalled that he first engraved on a rolled copper penny, having first discovered

the technique through a friend with access to an encyclopedia. Lossing specified the source involved to have been Chambers' <u>Cyclopedia</u>. Although Anderson's original plates are lost, the probable source is still available. It is quoted here in some length so that the reader will have an idea of the techniques involved and to demonstrate the specific nature of the instructions presented to beginning craftsmen.

ENGRAVING in copper, is employed in representing diverse subjects, as portroits, histories, landskips, foliages, figures, buildings, &c, either after paintings, or designs made for the purpose. It is performed either with the graver, or with aqua fortis.— For the first, there needs but little apparatus, and few instruments. The plate you work on being well polished, is covered over with a thin skin of virgins wax, and on this, the draught, or design, done in black lead, red chalk, or other ungummed matter is laid; and rubbed down for the wax to take off. The design thus transferred upon the wax, is traced through on the copper, with a point or needle: then heating the plate, and taking off the wax, the strokes remain; to be followed, heightened, &c. according to the tenor of the design, with the graver, which is to be very sharp, and well tempered.

In the conduct of the graver consists all the art; for which there are no rules to be given; all depending on the habitude, disposition, and genius of the artist.

The other instruments are, a cushion, or sandbag, to lay the plate on, to give it the necessary turns and motions.— A burnisher, round at one end, and usually flattish at the other, to rub out slips and failures, soften the stroaks, &c.— A scrapper, to pare off the surface, on occasion.— And a rubber of black cloth, or hat, to fill up the strokes, that it may appear how the work proceeds. 12

Chambers' encouragement to a hopeful engraver was not restricted to technique; he also offered a theory of art:

In a word, in art there is a moral view, or motive, superadded to the natural science, or perception; which motive is the proper principle, or premium mobile of art . . . The whole, therefore, ends in this, that science arises from a natural principle, art from a moral. 13

In the light of his earlier knowledge of printing processes, it seems probable that Anderson did, in fact, learn from an encyclopedia the rudiments of cutting in metal. As was true for other representative arts at the end of the eighteenth century, an applicative system for engravers simply did not exist in

New York. Anderson solved the problem by means of a published reference work that offered the basic techniques and the elements of a theory of art as well as illustrations of those techniques in the form of engraved plates. Furthermore, the account of engraving in Chambers' <u>Cyclopedia</u> included a description of a method of transferring a previous work onto the waxed plate, thus obviating the need for drawing skills. The artist could simply copy.

To acquire the techniques of their art, American engravers found a method that would prove more successful than for the other arts. But the use of an encyclopedia also presented obvious difficulties. Imitation, on a limited scale, was possible by following the printed directions and observing available prints. But authors like Chambers did not deal with the question of creativity, did not show the reader how to pass from dull imitation to an imaginative creation. None-theless, the rudiments of the craft could be acquired in this way, a craft soon to be in great demand by publishers of illustrated books. The development of creative sensibilities was another matter.

At the age of fourteen, Anderson was apprenticed to Dr. Joseph Young of New York City. The decision for a medical career apparently was made by his father, concerned that his son have a respectable position that held the potential for an adequate income. Engraving was not an established trade in the city, and the occupation hardly held prospects for economic security. Entries in Anderson's Diary for the period of his apprenticeship reveal a busy existence and give a rather detailed account of the medical curriculum at Columbia. But he also found time to work with engravings, as well as to study and draw from anatomical plates in his medical books. 15

Anderson's Diary begins on January 1, 1793 and at that time he had already begun to engrave on copper. During the month he was employed by three New York publishers: T. Swords, Hugh Gaines, and William Durell. Although only seventeen years old, his reputation had already been established at least one year earlier when he contributed seven plates to Dureil's publication of The Whole Genuine and Complete Works of Flavius Josephus . . . By Cauge Henry

Maynard, LL.D. (Cat. 428).* Frederick M. Burr, one of Anderson's nineteenth-century biographers, believed this volume to be "the most important illustrated work that had yet been published in New York." The book also evidences that, despite the source of his training, Anderson had sufficient skill while still an adolescent to market his work in competition with the few other engravers of the city. Only two of these workmen, Cornelius Tiebout and Amos Doolittle, contributed more plates to the Josephus than did the young medical apprentice.

Anderson did not restrict his reading to scientific treatises. He "read in [the] Encyclopedia on the Arts," as well as Hogarth, Lewis' Commerce of the Arts, and the Handmaid to the Arts. From these sources he learned techniques in addition to that of line engraving. Along with his mention of reading in the Handmaid to the Arts the Diary contains the following notation:

This morning I polish'd a small copperplate and etch'd it At noon I put the Aqua-fortis on the little plate I prepar'd some points for etching.²¹

At the same time that Anderson began etching, he read in the Hand-maid, and it is apparent that this was another published source from which he learned. The preface of the Handmaid was directed at would-be craftsmen such as Anderson, assuring them that the text could instruct even a novice:

Engraving, with a view to the production of prints, is the subject of the next part; and was very essential to the design of this work: and it is hoped, that what is here offered on this head will not be less useful to the public than acceptable to those who cultivate the art; as it may not only enable many, who might attempt engraving, if they were not debarred from proceeding by want of such aid, to initiate themselves into the rudiments; but even assist those who are already advanced to some degree of ability, in the practice of it. 22

The author promised both the rudiments of the subject and a measure of advanced training. A means of learning the art of engraving was offered to those who, through the lack of an apprentice system or some other disability, would otherwise be unable to learn the craft. Anderson accepted the invitation.

* Catalog numbers following titles refer to the Catalog of Published Works included as the Appendix of this thesis.

The instructions contained in the <u>Handmaid</u> were very specific both for etching and for other printmaking techniques. We know that Anderson read them and that he began to make etchings at the same time. He was given precise directions:

The plate being well polished and burnished, according to the directions given p. 47, as also cleansed from all greasiness by chalk or Spanish white, put it upon a chafing dish, in which there is a moderate fire . . . Then take up some of the soft varnish [formula previously given], well wrapt up in taffety, that is free from all grease and dirt, as also strong and sound in every part . . . and rub the plate, fixt as described over the fire . . . After this, with a sort of ball made of cotton tied up in taffety, beat every part of the plate gently, while the varnish be yet in a fluid state . . . When the plate is thus uniformly and thinly covered with the varnish, it must be blackened by a piece of flambeau. 23

.

The aquafortis used for the soft varnish is spirit of nitre, such as is used by the refiners; and which may be best prepared in the following manner. [Minute instructions follow, with a formula requiring twenty-four pounds of salt peter, twelve pounds of vitriol (sulphuric acid), and one gallon of water.]²⁴

.

Take soft sealing wax, such as is used for the putting seals of office to writs, grants, &c. (whether it be colored or not is not material); and soften it at a fire Having thus prepared the wax, lay the plate on a table, or any other flat surface where it may be duly level: and raise upon the edge of it, where there is nothing engraved, a small border of the wax of about an inch high in the resemblance of a little wall or rampart; and carry it round the plate, in such a manner, that, the aquafortis being poured within, it may be detained upon the plate; and prevented from spreading or running off at any part. 35

.

When it has appeared, that the aquafortis has for some time acted with vigour on the strong touches, and that it begins to take effect on the tender parts, it should be suffered to corrode only a very little more: and it may be easily examined, if the aquafortis has done its office, by laying bare a proper part, by a piece of coal.²⁶

Additional Diary entries during the month of April, 1793, appearing shortly after Anderson's reading of the <u>Handmaid</u>, strongly suggest that these were his first experiments in etching. This further points to the Handmaid of the Arts

as the major source of his education. There were experiments, dissatisfaction, and finally results:

This morning, burnish'd the Plate, took a walk along the Docks to get some pitch, I found a little and having melted it with my varnish, laid a coat on the Plate being not satisfied with this I laid on a new one, and find some flaws in this, at noon, coated it the third time -- having got the design mark'd on began to etch it. 27

.

I apply the <u>Aqua-fortis</u> to my plate and watch'd it with anxious attention 'till I thought it had done its office, clean'd it off, and took it to Burgis to get an impression.²⁸

Etchings are discussed throughout the Diary, but the sense of experimentation is lacking in these later entries. Anderson first learned the technique in April, 1793 from a printed European source.

One further technique remained which Anderson was to acquire. By mid-1793 he had learned the art of line engraving and etching through printed sources. But wood engraving, the technique that he was to introduce to America and which was to establish his career, had yet to be mastered. He was certainly familiar with the relief process involved, having already made relief cuts in typemetal which were locked into the chase along with the assembled type. Lossing states that early in 1794 Anderson saw a sketch of the life and works of Thomas Bewick (1753–1828), tegether with illustrations of birds and quadrupeds by that English engraver. It was at this time, Lossing continues, that the American discovered the possibilities of boxwood. Other historians of American wood engraving have generally accepted this account of Anderson's development as an engraver.

But it is apparent that Anderson was familiar with boxwood as a suitable material for printing at an earlier date. In his Diary for June 25, 1793 he wrote: "At noon, spoke to a Turner to prepare me a block of Boxwood for a Tobacco stamp, which I engaged to cut for two Negroes, price 12/." Although the stamp was only a block with relief letters for the marking of tobacco packages, the material used was specified to be boxwood, the wood best suited for engraving. By June of 1793 it is clear that Anderson both knew of the material and was able

to procure blocks suitable for cutting. An entry of two days later is most important:

At noon, Mr. Campbell having sent for me, I went to his shop, and agreed to cut about 100 Geometrical Figures, on wood, at 1/each -- exclusive of procuring the wood. Call'd at Ruthven's to enquire about Box-wood.³²

The figures carved were probably quite simple but they were worked on wood, which was again specified to be box. An additional entry suggests that Anderson was embarking upon what was for him a new process: "My fingers sore and cut with working at the wood engraving," he noted on June 29th. This is the first mention in the Diary of difficulty with any type of cutting. His hands were conditioned to the work of cutting typemetal for relief printing, and there is no indication that the use of the graver on copper caused him any considerable problems. Now his hands were injured, and for this he blamed his working on wood. During the same period in which he learned the technique of etching from the Handmaid, Anderson experienced physical hardship to learn an additional technique. He began cutting on wood in June, 1793. What was his source?

The earliest recorded examination of Bewick's work by Anderson occurred one year after the American began his trial cuts on wood. On June 6, 1794 he agreed to do the cuts from Bewick's <u>The Looking-Glass for the Mine!</u> (Cat. 54), on typemetal, for the publisher William Durell.³⁴ Three days later he made a significant entry in his Diary: "Finish'd the 2^d of Durell's cuts -- bought two small pieces of box-wood and engrav'd a <u>tail-piece</u> on one of them for an experiment -- cost ód."³⁵ It seems somewhat strange that Anderson should speak of an "experiment" on boxwood, when he had used the material within the past year to engrave one hundred small cuts.

Anderson was unaware of Bewick's most famous work, the <u>History of Quadrupeds</u> (London, 1785), for still another year. In August, 1795 he noted in his Diary: "Mr. Loudon call'd on me -- inform'd me of a History of Quadrupeds with elegant wooden cuts by Bewick at Wayland's. I went to price and examine it." From this it is clear that the two works by Bewick that have been

thought to be the source of Anderson's instruction were not in fact seen by him until after he had begun to work with boxwood. He did, however, attempt further experiments after seeing the Looking-Glass. These works must have shown something that he did not already know.

One part of the explanation must lie with a source with which Anderson was already familiar: contemporary encyclopedias. As noted above, Anderson did read about the various arts in these works, and from them he had learned the rudiments of engraving. In his readings, he could not fail to find suggestions for further instruction. Lossing specified that Anderson read in Chambers' Cyclopedia. The entry for engraving includes the following:

Engraving is divided into several branches, according to the matter it is practiced on, and the manner of performing it. The original way of engraving on wood is now distinguished by the name of cutting on wood; That on metals with aqua fortis, is called etching See CUTTING in Wood, ETCHING, MEZZOTINTO, &c. 37

The entry for "CUTTING in Wood" is contained within the same volume, and it is probable that the young student turned to this section during his previously documented examination of the encyclopedia. The entry reads:

It is used for various purposes, as, for initial or figured letters, head and tail-pieces of books; and even for schemes and other figures, to save the expense of engraving on copper . . . The art of cutting in wood was certainly carried to a very great pitch about 150 years ago; and might even vie, for beauty and justness, with that of engraving in copper: at present it is in a low condition, as having been long neglected, and the application of artists wholly employed on copper, as the more easy and promising province: not but that wooden cuts have the advantage of those in copper on many accounts; chiefly for figures and devises in books; as being printed at the same time, and in the same press as the letters: whereas for the other, there is required a particular impression. 38

For an eighteen year old young man hoping to find economic success through the practice of engraving, such advice would appear almost irresistable. Wood cutting was particularly suited for "head and tail-pieces of books;" Anderson's customers were primarily publishers. As a further incentive, the use of relief-engraved wood blocks permitted the illustrations and text to be "printed at

the same time" thereby reducing costs. Moreover, wood was specifically recommended "to save the expense of engraving on copper." As a student of engraving who read the references of his day, Anderson must have been led to this entry; the inducements to learn the less expensive technique, of particular value to book printers, must have been compelling.

Contemporary works not only pointed out advantages inherent in the technique of wood cutting, they also offered instruction:

The <u>cutters</u> in <u>wood</u> begin with preparing a plank or block, of the size and thickness required, and very even and smooth on the side to be <u>cut</u>: they usually take pear-tree, or box; though the latter is the best, as being the closest, and least liable to be worm-eaten. On this block they draw their design with a pen, or pencil, just as they would have it printed. Those who cannot draw their own design, as many there cannot, make use of the design furnished them by another; fastening it upon the block with paste made of flower and water, with a little vinegar; the strokes or lines turned toward the wood. When the paper is dry, they wash it gently over with a sponge dipped in water; which done, they take off the paper by little and little, still rubbing it a little first, with the tip of the finger; till at length there be nothing left on the block, but the strokes of ink that form the design, which mark out so much of the block as is to be spared, or left standing.

The rest they cut off, and take away very curiously with the points of very sharp knives, or little chissels, or gravers, according to the bigness or delicacy of the work; for they need no other instruments.³⁹

In this way Anderson had access to complete directions which included the type of wood that would offer the finest grain, as well as instructions for "those who cannot draw." These would offer encouraging opportunities to a young man without access to formal training, who wished to develop as an engraver. And such directions were not limited to Ephraim Chambers' Cyclopedia. William Hall's New Royal Encyclopedia (London, 1791) contained similar information that would aid a beginning student of engraving. This latter work also offered additional advice. It was emphasized that in using boxwood, cutting was to be aone on the end grain. This procedure results in finer lines, and an engraver perhaps would have discovered this himself; but the technique was

described in print, readily available for use. A further economic incentive was also included by Hall: "The tools used in performing this kind of engraving are very simple: a knife, two or three small gouges, a scorper and graver, are all that are necessary." 40

Anderson was employing basic wood cutting techniques as early as 1793, one year before he had seen any work by Bewick. As with other processes, information concerning this form of engraving was readily available, and Anderson made early, painful attempts with the medium. But if it is established that he was working with wood blocks by this date, the question remains concerning his "experimenting" immediately after seeing Bewick's cuts for the Looking-Glass one year later. A consideration of the two varying techniques involved with the wood block suggests the answer.

In the passage quoted from Chambers on the cutting in wood, the process described was the traditional practice of cutting away all but the black lines that constitute the design, "till at length there be nothing left on the block, but the strokes of ink that form the design, which mark out so much of the block to be spared, or left standing." When printed, the cut block would reproduce a line drawing. This is the method used since the time of Albrecht Durer (1471–1528).

The wood cuts in Bewick's Looking-Glass do not reflect this approach to the block, and a very significant image is the result. The image is constructed from what will not be printed. The figures are defined by the incised lines that receive no ink, while the printed surface serves as a black background to the white lines. As in mezzotint, the artist works from black to white, separating the image from the black ink. The process is known as "white line" and is spoken of as wood engraving to distinguish it from the wood cut. It is not an intaglio process, although the design is engraved into the surface. The system has several advantages. The use of cross-hatching for tonal areas was a laborious process in the wood cut technique, since the interstices formed by the parallel and perpendicular lines had to be separately removed. In Bewick's wood engraving, on the

other hand, the white lines can intersect freely, leaving small areas of black surrounded by quickly-cut negative boundaries. Fine printed (black) lines in a wood cut were necessarily of limited strength and were subject to damage in the press; in wood engraving, fine lines (white) offered no such difficulties, allowing the rendition of minute detail with comparative ease.

Beyond differences in durability and method of execution, the greatest difference between cutting and engraving on wood is the range of visual effects which can be achieved. Wood cutting is essentially a linear technique; wood engraving uses the white line to achieve tonal effects. Starting from solid black, the craftsman cuts white lines of varying delicacy and width to lighten entire areas, building his design with grey and white tonalities rather than black lines.

Although Anderson was familiar with the technique of the wood cut, the tones achieved by Bewick on boxwood were completely new to him when the Looking-Glass came to his attention in 1794. It was doubtless this new tonal effect on wood that lead to Anderson's "experimentation." From published sources he acquired the knowledge and skills required to produce prints from wood blocks. From these encyclopedias the advantages of relief engraving, particularly in regard to the illustration of books, were also set before him. One year later, after seeing the white-line tonal effects of Bewick, he attempted to use his previously acquired skills to achieve results similar to those of the English craftsman. There were, then, two sources for his wood engraving, one providing basic skills and the other suggesting style. Both sources were in published and readily available books.

In his early years, Anderson had experiences similar to other aspiring artists in America. He was of modest means and received little encouragement to pursue an artistic career. Yet unique advantages, in the form of original works and detailed directions, were offered to beginning engravers. It is from these English sources that the career of Alexander Anderson began.

Notes to Chapter 1

For the complete collection of Anderson's engravings, see Alexander Anderson, "Scrap Books," 12 vols. (unpublished, NYPL). A catalog of the published works in which his engravings appear is included as the Appendix to this thesis.

- ²Democracy in America, II (1840; rpt. New York: Vintage-Knopf, 1945), pp. 50, 52.
- ³Quoted in E. P. Richardson, <u>A Short History of Painting in America</u> (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1963), p. 60.
- ⁴ "The Diary of Alexander Anderson" (unpublished, Columbia University Library). Hereafter referred to as "Diary".
- ⁵Alexander Anderson, "Sketch of the Life of Alex^r. Anderson" (unpublished, 1847, New-York Historical Society) [rpt. in Frederick M. Burr, <u>Life and Works of Alexander Anderson</u>].
- Benjamin J. Lossing, <u>A Memorial of Alexander Anderson</u>, <u>M.D.</u>, the First Engraver on Wood in America (New York: Printed for the subscribers, 1872).

⁷<u>Ibid</u>., p. 20.

8_{Ibid}.

⁹"Diary," 21 Jan. 1794.

Anderson, "Sketch," p. 1.

- 11 Lossing, Alexander Anderson, p. 22.
- 12 Ephraim Chambers, <u>Cyclopedia: or, an Universal Dictionary of the Arts and Sciences</u> (London, 1738).

13 <u>Ibid</u>., p.x.

14 Lossing, Alexander Anderson, p. 23.

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<sup>15</sup>"Diary," 27 Feb. 1793.
        16 "Diary," 1 Jan. 1793.
Frederick M. Burr, Life and Works of Alexander Anderson, M.D.: The First American Wood Engraver (New York: Burr Brothers, 1893), p. 30.
        <sup>18</sup>"Diary, " 9 Feb. 1793.
        19 "Diary," 13 Feb. 1794.
       <sup>20</sup>"Diary, " 22 Apr. 1793.
        <sup>22</sup>Robert Dossie, <u>The Handmaid to the Arts</u> (London: J. Nourse, 1758), II,
pp. v-vi.
        <sup>23</sup>lbid., pp. 90-91.
        <sup>24</sup>lbid., pp. 144-145.
        <sup>25</sup>lbid., p. 160.
        <sup>26</sup>lbid., p. 162.
        <sup>27</sup> "Diary, " 24 Apr. 1793.
        <sup>28</sup>"Diary, " 29 Apr. 1793.
        <sup>29</sup>"Diary" entries concerning typemetal cuts occur as early as 10 Jan. 1793.
        30 Lossing, Alexander Anderson, p. 32.
        31 "Diary," 25 June 1793.
        32 "Diary," 27 June 1793.
        33 "Diary," 29 June 1793.
        34<sub>"Diary," 6 June 1794.</sub>
        35 "Diary," 9 June 1794.
        36 "Diary," 17 Aug. 1795.
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- 37 Chambers, <u>Cyclopedia</u>, I, n.p., "Engraving."
- 38 <u>Ibid</u>., I, n.p., "Cutting <u>in wood</u>."
- 39_{lbid}.
- 40 William Henry Hall, The New Royal Encyclopedia; or, Complete Modern Dictionary of the Arts & Sciences, I, n.p., "CUTTING in Wood."

Chapter II

Maturity and Decline

During the last decade of the eighteenth century, Anderson's primary occupation was as a medical student, then as a physician. He was licensed to practice medicine in the City of New York in 1795 and received his medical degree from Columbia the following year. Engraving was his primary pleasure, but not his vocation or means of financial support. Even when medicine was his livelihood, his interests were clearly elsewhere. While still a medical apprentice he noted in his Diary: "I feel rather at a loss without engraving." Later success as a doctor failed to alter his outlook. During the yellow-fever epidemic of 1795 he was appointed as custodian of Bellevue Hospital, a significant position for the newly-licensed physician. But neither the responsibilities nor the salary of twenty shillings a day retained his interest: "I cannot help looking back to my Engraving Table and thinking it a fitter station for me." During his tenure at Bellevue he refused a permanent appointment as Physician to the Dispensary at a salary of two hundred pounds. He believed engraving to be a preferable career. 3

During this period of vacillation between two careers, much of the engraving Anderson produced was of an experimental nature. His development of different techniques and early experimentation after the style of Thomas Bewick were discussed in the previous chapter. This pattern continued once the basic methods were learned. His Diary contains the following entry for 1797:

I have now but little business of the medical kind to attend, and have therefore devoted some of my time to engraving. This latter kind of employment has not as yet yielded any profit, for I have only been making experiments and practicing. The beautiful specimens of Bewick's works have been the means of stimulating me to improve in the art of Engraving on wood.⁴

His work in wood after Bewick led to further attempts to realize the limits and possibilities of that medium. Unlike most other materials used for engraving, wood is highly susceptible to damage from the weather. Months of work can be lost by the splitting or cracking of a block from humidity, and the tensile strength of the block itself imposes limitations on the size of the prints. These limitations came to be recognized by Anderson while working on a large wood engraving of a skeleton he had copied from an edition of Albinus' medicine. The block was four feet by two, monumental for the medium, and it cracked under the extremes of the New York winter weather. Repairs were made, and in his account of pulling prints from it, Anderson left a detailed description of his work:

I finish'd my weighty jobb of engraving the skeleton, at last, and must now set myself to work to print it. My method of doing it is this — The plate is laid on a table in the garret — the paper properly moisten'd is applied over it, and on that some loose papers; over all, a level board covered with flannel is plac'd and a strong pressure applied to it by means of a lever — the board is then removed and all the papers except one which covers the printed sheet — this is rubbed with a smooth piece of bexwood, and the business is done.⁷

This ambitious project was soon ended; unable to sustain the repeated pressure of printing, the huge block was irreparably broken.⁸

Anderson continued to work in several media, using etching, engraving, and wood engraving for a variety of publications. After the American Revolution, illustrated works were being produced in even greater numbers, and the work of the physician-engraver from New York appeared in publications issued in New York, New Haven, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. His reputation was gradually increasing, and his engravings appeared in over thirty-five volumes before the turn of the century. Yet still he remained a physician, anxious for financial success and medical knowledge. Indeed, so acute was his curiosity in the field of medicine that he even assisted a grave-robber in obtaining an infant

cadaver for anatomical study.⁹ He was a conscientious physician; but the desire to work in the arts remained unchecked. He confided in his Diary that

the thoughts of Engraving have occupied my mind today; I could not help looking back to the pleasures of that art, like the Israelites to the flesh-pots of Egypt. I had even resolv'd to indulge myself now and then in engraving on wood, and cut several patterns for tools which I propos'd to have made, but the dread of being "unstable as water" deterred me, and I laid by the patterns.¹⁰

A large market for Anderson's work did not yet exist, and economic insecurity posed a constant threat for the young artist. His marriage to Nancy Van Vleck in 1797 gave him an additional incentive to avoid being as "unstable as water," and in an attempt to secure funds that would permit an engraving career, he opened his "Lilliputian Book Store" in August of the same year. In less than two months the business had failed, though the loss was kept to thirty pounds.¹¹

The year 1798 was of major importance in Anderson's life. He fathered a son and soon found himself in serious financial difficulty. He complained in his Diary that he was "really distress'd for want of money and every endeavor to procure it seems vain." ¹² Within a month, one of the great yellow-fever epidemics struck New York, bringing tragedy to physician and patient alike. Before the fever passed, Anderson had lost both parents, his wife and child, brother, mother-in-law, and sister-in-law. At this time, Anderson again held a position at Bellevue, and during this period of suffering and personal loss considered abandoning the medical profession. ¹³ He thought again of engraving, first discussing its business possibilities with the New York engraver Cornelius Tiebout. ¹⁴

Clearly Anderson had not found medicine to be a completely satisfying career, and his knowledge had failed to save his immediate family. As the autumn cold relieved the fever epidemic, he noted in his Diary: "Before breakfast I took a walk to the landing — all the way debating on the old subject of engraving." In early November he abandoned the mcdical profession, and

within a week began another large anatomical engraving on wood. Yet even with his medical career and family loss behind him, his new vocation could cause additional pain: "The Box-wood plank which I have had prepared for my engraving begins to shrink, and every crack goes to my heart."

Anderson's career as a physician was over, but his prospects as a professional engraver were not especially bright. Although he was already familiar with the basic techniques, his work had yet to produce any profit. And he had already developed a sense of his own limitations. In July of 1798 he confided in his Diary: "I gave up the idea of being a great designer." As his artistic career was beginning, Anderson was on the verge of financial disaster and had recently undergone considerable personal tragedy. He had few aspirations as a designer, seeking only the personal satisfactions of working directly on the block and of producing prints that could contribute to the education of his countrymen. He devoted his life to the craft of engraving, rather than to the art of design. His artistry was in repreducing visually the ideas of others and in developing a medium that permitted their widespread distribution. He was a craftsman in the romantic age, familiar with his materials, full of a tragic sense of loss, and resigned to the imitation of others for most of his designs.

The habits and tendencies of Anderson's early career continued well into the nineteenth century, with Bewick's work persisting as his model for the next seventy years. His early work with the wood block had provided a measure of success, and Anderson was an artist dependent upon commissions. Closely adhering to the formula of his early successes, his work maintained a remarkable consistency throughout his lifetime. The wood engraving was Anderson's contribution to American illustration, a medium with which he had experimented as an inquisitive student and depended upon as a professional artist. It assured his success, as well as his publishers', and he continued with the technique throughout his career.

Financial worries also plagued Anderson throughout his lifetime.

Although his developments in wood engraving gradually created a considerable

demand for his work, he never realized the economic stability that he wanted. Because of "disappointments in money affairs," he expressed a particular need for funds to the printer John Babcock in 1803. Thirty-four years later, he blamed the "speculating mania" for the lack of business and funds in a letter to his daughter. The death of the popular writer and critic A. J. Downing in the explosion of the Henry Clay in 1852 brought another worry; again writing to his daughter he lamented: "I have been the loser by the death of Mr. Downing, as he threw a good deal of business my way." Anderson's work was to appear in hundreds of nineteenth-century imprints, but constant work and frugality failed to result in financial security.

Anderson had developed a sound, effective basis for the mass production of illustrations, assuring publishers of a uniform quality of work. But this consistency was also symptomatic of his ultimate decline. New tastes appeared; the most popular illustrated works in the second quarter of the nineteenth century were the American Literary Annuals and Gift Books. One historian of these publications has noted that they were ideally suited to an aspiring middle-class; they had emotional rather than intellectual appeal, and were handsome and costly as well as artistic and refined. Moreover, they met the popular demand for culture, and were a showplace for the support of American art. But the taste of the period required the metallic sheen of steel plates, which was not a product of the Bewickian wood-engraving technique. Wood illustrations are uncommon in these works:

In gi[£] books the luxurious metal engravings prevailed, and wood cuts and wood engravings were used when the paper was too coarse to take metal impressions — in juvenile volumes, almanacs, or the like.²³

Steel engraving ("elegant" and "highly finished" say the title pages and advertisements) ruled supreme in keepsakes and gift-books; wood engravings and lithography must have seemed too common for such genteel publications. 24

In the illustrated magazines of the same period, a similar preference for copper and steel engravings prevailed. Wood engraving did receive some representation, but often in juvenile magazines, or for the utilitarian rather

than artistic illustrations of the major magazines. Copper plate and steel engravings were the favored media for the embellishment of the illustrated magazines.²⁵

This new preference did not coincide with Anderson's technique, and he proved unable to adapt to it or to accept the reigning position of the new style. In a letter written to his daughter in 1864 he observed: "Some Volumes of Harper's Magazine have entertain'd me a good deal, of late, particularly the elegant cuts, some of the matter rather wishywashy to my taste." The great period of American wood illustration was soon to end, and with it the career of the medium's founder.

For the rest of his life, Anderson continued to work in the technique he had developed. But old age and changing times gradually extracted their due. Still working at age eighty-one, he complained in a letter to his daughter that "I am getting old and rather dull from want of my favorite employment — just now there is a complaint that there is little to do among the [wood] engravers. Anderson died on January 17, 1870, ninety-four years of age and still working at his craft. Three years before his death, with the popular taste he had helped to develop now adopting other styles, and with his years weighing heavily, he wrote:

Old Ossian was right when he exclaim'd "Age is dark & unlovely" but he was not the first to announce the fact, nor the last to feel the truth of the expression. 28

- 19 Letter, Alexander Anderson to John Babcock, 21 Mar. 1803, American Antiquarian Society.
- ²⁰Letter, Alexander Anderson to Julia Malvina Halsey, Feb. 1837, New-York Historical Society, Anderson Papers.
 - ²¹ <u>Ibid</u>., 22 Oct. 1852.
- 22Ralph Thompson, American Literary Annuals & Gift Books: 1825–1865 (1936; rpt. New York: Archon Books, 1967), p. 4.
 - ²³<u>Ibid</u>., p. 47.
- ²⁴Frank Weitenkampf, "The Keepsake in Nineteenth-Century Art," <u>Boston Public Library Quarterly</u> 4 (1952), p. 141.
- ²⁵Frank Luther Mott, <u>A History of American Magazines 1741–1850</u> (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1930), pp. 522–523.
- Letter, Alexander Anderson to Julia Malvina Halsey, Oct. 1864, New-York Historical Society, Anderson Papers.
 - ²⁷<u>Ibid</u>., 8 Sep. 1856.
 - ²⁸Ibid., 27 Apr. 1867.

Chapter III

Wood Engraving in the Nineteenth Century

For the United States, the first half of the nineteenth century was a period of economic growth and rising expectations, a time of optimistic faith in both present and future. The Federalist party had disappeared, followed by the expansive age of Jacksonian democracy. The middle class was predominant, its egalitarian tendencies affecting most institutions of American life. This nineteenth-century optimism, along with ideals of social equality, extended into the schoolhouse, causing Alexis de Tocqueville to comment on the pervasiveness of a middling education:

It is not only the fortunes of men that are equal in America; even their acquirements partake in some degree of the same uniformity. I do not believe that there is a country in the world where, in proportion to the population, there are so few ignorant and at the same time so few learned individuals. Primary instruction is within the reach of everybody; superior instruction is scarcely to be obtained by any

It cannot be doubted that in the United States instruction of the people powerfully contributes to the support of the democratic republic; and such must always be the case, I believe, where the instruction which enlightens the understanding is not separated from the moral education which amends the heart.¹

Education was a fundamental tenet in the catechism of democracy. In 1846 the Massachusetts educator Horace Mann wrote:

I believe in the existence of a great, immortal, immutable principle of natural law . . . a principle of divine origin, clearly legible in the ways of Providence as those ways are manifested in the order of nature and the history of the race, which provides the absolute right to an education of every human being that comes into the world.²

The United States was entering an era of rapid economic expansion, with both the prospects for increasing wealth and growing evidence for the rewards of industry and labor. In the same report, Mann stated what he believed to be the source of America's bounty:

One copious, exhaustless fountain supplies all this abundance. It is education — the intellectual, moral, and religious education of the people. Having no other mines to work, Massachusetts has mined into the human intellect; and, from its limitless resources, she has won more sustaining and enduring prosperity and happiness than if she had been founded on a stratification of gold and silver

The nineteenth century's optimistic faith in education and the improvement of men coincided with the full development of wood engraving, a technique which allowed for inexpensive, quality reproduction of illustrated books. The prints produced gave visual representation to the ideals to be taught, while the beliefs in the value of wide-spread education insured a market for engraved material. Thus the two developments, popular education and wood engraving, could be mutually reinforcing, reflecting the philosophy of the age and contributing to its diffusion. For most men of the period, there was little doubt that graphics made important contributions to society as a whole. In an 1893 biography of Anderson, Frederick M. Burr wrote:

A distinguished author has said that illustration stands second only to printing as a means of civilization. We should therefore regard the men who place the beauties of art within the reach of the multitudes as most important factors in the improvement of the world.⁴

This attitude was prevalent at the beginning of the nineteenth century as well, as seen in a work printed in London shortly after the American Revolution. Commenting on the visual arts, The Artist's Repository and Drawing Magazine suggested that

of all the imitative arts, painting itself not excepted, engraving is the most applicable to general use, and the most resorted to form the necessities of mankind. From its earliest infancy, it has been called in, as an assistant in almost every branch of knowledge; and has, in a very high degree, facilitated the means of communicating our ideas.⁵

During the first part of the nineteenth century, the wood engraving would be an "assistant" to the spread of knowledge so revered in America. As observed by Tocqueville, the education available was neither exceptionally poor nor decidedly superior; yet although perhaps of mediocre quality, it offered fairly specific goals. Not the least of these was a proper moral foundation upon which all future activity could be based. In 1853 Charles Sanders published The School Reader: Second Book (Cat. 538), which contained twenty illustrations by Anderson. In his preface he clearly stated his purposes and the intent behind his text and wood engravings:

But, above and beyond all excellencies of style, matter and arrangement, the moral influence of the lessons has been steadily considered; since, whatever else may form the superstructure, sounds [sic morals must ever be the foundation of right education.

This moralistic attitude was not restricted to pedagogues or theorists. In a letter to his nephew and fellow artist, Washington Allston wrote of "... the great purpose of life — which is, by the cultivation of the moral nature, to prepare... for a better world." Public schools, works of art, books, and illustrations, all shared in the same educational purpose. Morality was essential to the well-being of society and the individual; it was the basis for all thought and action, as well as a desirable goal in its own right. This moral nature could be acquired and improved by means of instruction. This presumed ethical basis of art extends back to classical times, and throughout history creative works have served instructive as well as aesthetic functions. During the age of the Common Man this tradition was linked to the free printing press, resulting in the mass production of books and illustrations. The moralistic tradition of art was given a new means of dissemination. Wood engraving, with its potential for inexpensive reproductions, was to have an important part in this development.

* * * *

Historically, the earliest printed efforts to spread knowledge were accompanied by woodcut illustrations. The printing press and moveable type were invented in the mid-fifteenth century, and by 1493 the Nurnberg Chronicie

ress. With Martin Luther's declaration in 1517, printing and illustration were both seen as possible aids to heresy and insurrection as well as to true dogma. In America, provincial governors were receiving the following instructions by 1686:

And forasmuch as great inconvenience may arise by the liberty of printing within our said territory under your government you are to provide by all necessary orders that no person keep any printing-press for printing, nor that any book pamphlet or other matters whatsoever be printed without your especial leave and license first obtained.⁸

The official connection between dissent and printing hastened the decline of the latter, and with it the art of woodcut illustration.

Despite this handicap, working on the wood block continued on a limited scale, but not until the time of Thomas Bewick was the art of wood engraving given serious attention. This artist made wood engraving into an important graphic medium, and it is on his style that Anderson's work is based. Two of the earliest books to contain illustrations by Bewick were Moral Instructions of a Father to his Son (Newcastle: Thomas Saint, 1772) and The Youth's Instructor and Entertaining Story-Teller (Newcastle: Thomas Saint, 1774). These titles suggest that from its earliest use, wood engraving was associated with education and the hope for the improvement of men. The young may be entertained, but they are also to be instructed.

Perhaps Bewick's most famous work is his <u>General History of Quadrupeds</u> (Newcastle, 1790) which from its inception was intended both to serve the scholarly and to bring knowledge to the young. In a letter written to the Society of Arts before publication, Bewick noted:

When the curious are served by the best impressions, a Second and inferior Edition will be done for the use of youth at Schools, with a view more widely to diffuse a better Knowledge of this Branch of Natural History, and also to awaken in the contemplative mind an admiration of the wonderful works of Nature.

The book met with considerable success and several editions appeared in guick succession. In a letter written in 1805 Bewick reflected on this success,

while at the same time indicating his own intentions:

... but my principal object was (and still is) directed to the mental pleasure and improvement of youth; to engage their attention, to direct their steps aright, and to lead them on till they become enamoured of this innocent and delightful pursuit."

As the leading figure in the development of wood engraving, Bewick's concern with moral and educational values becomes an important aspect of his work. He applied his abilities to illustrate books which of themselves had an elevating purpose, and the pictures were intended to reinforce the message of the text. Although his nineteenth-century audience was aware of his importance in establishing wood engraving as a means of inexpensive reproduction, Bewick's work was perhaps more appreciated for its potential contribution to moral improvement. Toward the end of the Victorian era one of his biographers noted:

And it is to be observed with profound emphasis, that this reforming tendency was not only in his art, but also most strongly in the sentiment and teaching of the subjects his pencil and graver depicted. As a reviver of wood engraving he claims our attention, but as a reformer and satirical commentator on man's ways of working he demands and retains our fullest consideration. We learn from him how hollow is the fame of the battlefield by the children astride the gravestones, and the old comrades greeting each other after many days' separation.¹¹

In 1838, two years after his death, an historian of wood engraving made a similar assessment of Bewick's work: "...he faithfully represents Nature, and at the same time conveys a moral which gives additional interest to the sketch." This attitude prevailed for much of the nineteenth century. Art existed for a purpose, and the concept of art for art's sake was foreign to illustrations of that era. The technique of wood engraving was admired, and skill in drawing and working upon the block were expected. But pictorial ability alone was not enough; there was a rising generation to be properly instructed, to be taught values as well as facts. Art was a partner in this reforming process, with wood engraving expected to appeal to youth and "to direct their steps aright." Bewick developed the engraving technique, and successfully applied it within his century's moralistic frame of reference. Although an innovator with regard to medium, he was very much a mon of his own time.

* * * *

One of Anderson's nineteenth-century biographers considered him to be the "Bewick of America." As seen in Chapter I, Anderson was primarily responsible for the introduction of wood engraving to America. And like his English model, Anderson applied this technique toward the moral and intellectual improvement of his countrymen. He was praised as having "skillfully practised among us the art of Wood Engraving which plays so conspicuous a part in modern civilization." As in England, Americans of the nineteenth century viewed wood engraving as a significant contributor to the progress of human society. The engraver's art was expected to be useful, to lead the young to a higher level of thought and action. Anderson's work fulfilled this requirement, assuring his success.

His era wanted didactic illustration, and Anderson's personality was such that his engravings would inevitably satisfy the taste of his age. His attitude is suggested by a Diary entry of 1797. When planning his ill-fated bookstore, he thought it appropriate to have an advertising illustration to represent the nature of his shop. The sketch, which he specified to be of his own design, he described as follows:

Several children are represented playing and two of them in the act of quarrelling — the Devil is preparing to claw them but is assailed by the spear of Minerva who is at the same time presenting a book to the children.¹⁶

Although such an image lacks subtlety, it does express clearly the coincidence of Anderson's philosophy with that of his time. The printed book is a safe defense against the evils of this world, and failure to employ it will at the least result in young men beset with remptations. Illustrated books, based on the model of Bewick, were a sure avenue of improvement. The engravings provided by Anderson were conceived in moral terms, and accepted on that basis by authors and publishers.

* * * *

A sampling of nineteenth-century writings suggests the importance that was attributed to visual material. Emma Willard (1787-1870) was a noted educator who, in addition to founding in 1821 the Troy Female Seminary, was a writer of history and geography textbooks that were widely used by school children and served in the training of hundreds of teachers. In the 1863 preface to her Abridged History of the United States (Cat. 676) she stated the goals of her educational ideas:

We have, indeed, been desirous to cultivate the memory, the intellect, and the taste. But much more anxious have we been to sow the seeds of virtue, by showing the good in such amiable lights, that the youthful heart shall kindle into desires of imitation. ¹⁶

As the illustrator for this volume, Anderson assisted in the sowing of her "seeds of virtue." Mrs. Willard believed that his labors were an important element of her history:

Anderson's illustrations are an aid in the efforts of the young to retain "the good" which the book has to offer. And the author has confidence in her chosen engraver, realizing the importance of quality reproductions. In the preface she notes that her history has been improved by new illustrations; she "has not suffered the important study of our country's history to be run down in her hands" by the inclusion of "imperfect likenesses of the great and good, which diminish reverence by destroying the mind's ideal of moral beauty."

Work of poor quality would counteract her virtuous intentions; Mrs. Willard's faith in Anderson is strong enough to entrust to him the task of impressing into the mind of youth the virtues of the nation. He shared her assumptions and fulfilled her expectations.

Mrs. Willard's interest in the utility of illustrations was long-standing, and had appeared some thirty years earlier in William Channing Woodbridge's A System of Universal Geography, 4th ed. (Harrford, 1831; Cat. 681).

The preface was written by Mrs. Willard, who cited illustration (Fig. 1) as an essential path to the mind:

We admit little that may not be traced to one of these two laws of the intellect; — first, that the objects of sight more readily behecome the subjects of conception and memory, than those of the other senses; and secondly, that the best of all methods to abridge the labor of the mind, and to enable the memory to lay up the most in the smallest compass, is to class particulars under general heads. 19

Illustration was essential to the first law of the intellect, in that it visually presented ideas so that they could "more readily become the subjects of conception and memory." This theory of education is completely dependent upon mass-produced, inexpensive reproductions for school books; the technique which made it possible was introduced to the United States by Anderson. Little wonder that his contemporaries saw him as a prime force in the advancement of civilization.

In 1815 appeared <u>The Juvenile Lavater</u> by George Brewer (Cat. 99); the full title specified that the work was

. . . calculated for the Instruction and Entertainment of Young Persons; Interspersed with Moral and Amusing Tales, Illustrating the Benefit and Happiness Attendant on the Good Passions, and the misfortunes which Ensue the Bad in the Circumstances of Life.²⁰

Primarily pictorial, the book's intent was straight-forward: the young can be inspired to be good simply by looking at appropriate illustrations. The figures were designed by Charles Le Brun (1619-1690) and engraved for this edition by Anderson (Fig. 2). The engraver was again assisting in the progress of virtue, for his contemporaries expected that his labors "may have some effect on the mind of the young reader, who when he observes that the best people look best and most happy, will be inclined to become of the best."

Advances in educational method were an important concern to men of the nineteenth century, and considerable literature was devoted to the subject. Joseph Lancaster's <u>The British System of Education</u> (Cat.382) was published in 1812, with wood engravings by Anderson (Fig. 3). Designed to

to educate great numbers of children at minimal expense, the system met with considerable success in England. Both the economic benefits and its qualifications for mass instruction made it of interest to American educators. In the preface of the foreign edition Lancaster expressed the hope that his statement would

. . . be a sufficient apology for the delay of this publication, which might have been issued much earlier, had he not been engaged in promoting the education of many thousands of poor children; it could not, however, have been as perfect as to the engravings, which will give an idea of a school of this plan, to many persons who cannot possibly have an opportunity of seeing one.

A plan for the education of "many thousands" could scarcely fail to attract those Americans who believed in the necessity of universal education for a democracy. The delay in publication allowed for high-quality engravings, which were required in order to convey an idea of the school to interested persons unable to view the English model. Again, seeing was essential, and that vision was provided by means of the wood engraving technique. Anderson's endeavors facilitated the transfer of information, and the importance of his labors did not go unnoticed by his countrymen.

Although moral and intellectual improvement were considered practical goals in themselves, books were also published to assist in the learning of the various trades. Included with this group was Rensselaer Bentley's <u>The Pictorial Reader</u> of 1847 (Cat. 49). This manual offered lessons on a variety of crafts, "With Illustrations to Render them Interesting and Attractive." Relying on the same premise as Brewer in the <u>Juvenile Lavater</u>, Bentley assumed that if an occupation looked interesting, young men would be attracted to it. Fundamental to this idea was the presence of illustrated material. Bentley noted that

many things may be explained and understood better by means of pictures than by use of words; but when both are employed, the subject is rendered familiar to the weakest capacity.²⁴

The combination of word and picture (Figs. 4, 5) was an unquestioned means of influencing the young, and both elements were essential to this educational

philosophy. The two components were used by Bentley in presenting the manual trades:

Mechanical labor has also received particular attention. The instruments used in various trades, and the articles manufactured, have been illustrated by accurate engravings with explanations, designed to produce a favorable impression on the minds of children, and render the mechanic arts, in which many of them will probably engage for life, still more inviting and acceptable.²⁵

Workers who find their trade interesting and inviting are more likely to produce goods of better quality and in greater numbers. As well as improving character, illustrations could also increase economic productivity. Accepting this reasoning, as many did in the nineteenth century, the place of the illustrator was viewed as one of importance in the march of progress. The man who introduced the mass-illustration process was indeed a leader in the course of civilization.

* * * *

Notwithstanding the great emphasis given to the instruction and improvement of the young, attention was also paid to improving the general level of taste in the nineteenth century. In 1808 the artist William Birch commented on the role of art in the development of a national identity:

The Fine Arts are, as to the American Nation at large, in their infancy; to promote them in propagating Taste in the habit of rural retirement, supported by the growing wealth of the Nation, will be to form the National character favourable to the civilization of this young country, and establish that respectability which will add to its strength. 26

For artist and citizen alike, the arts did not exist in isolation. As democratic taste improved, a greater civilization would appear in the New World, one which would demand the respect of Europe and give strength to its own people.

This nineteenth-century doctrine was based upon the assumption that personal taste could, in fact, be generally improved, that it was not simply the purview of the rich and well-born. This inherently democratic assumption derived from the writings of Edmund Burke (1729-1797). In 1759 he added an essay on taste to his A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful. In his essay he wrote that taste has three components:

the senses, imagination, and judgment. The first he held to be the same for all men, and the latter two are subject to improvement by giving close attention to objects, and by developing habits of reasoning.²⁷

Burke's essay suggested that by seeing works which appealed to the senses, directing attention to works of quality, and developing proper habits of judgment, Americans could improve their knowledge of the beautiful and the good. Once this process was begun, many believed, the course of civilization in the United States could not fail to reach unlimited greatness in morality, government, the arts, and social well-being. Although the last Puritan had long since vanished, the nineteenth century was still a great age of faith. This belief was widespread but was perhaps best expressed by the Transcendentalists, that group of nineteenth-century writers who articulated the essential philosophy of Anderson's era. Ralph Waldo Emerson summarized the American belief in man's limitless improvement in "The American Scholar":

The world is nothing, the man is all; in yourself is the law of all nature, and you know not yet how a globule of sap ascends; in yourself slumbers the whole of Reason; it is for you to know all; it is for you to dare all.²⁸

In 1857 Calvert Vaux published <u>Villas and Cottages: A Series of Designs Prepared for Execution in the United States</u> (Cat. 639). The book was intended to improve the American taste in domestic architecture, a development which in turn could be expected to accomplish two ends: improve the fortunes of architects, and aid in the general progress of American culture. Vaux wrote that, in the past, Republicanism had seen the arts as allied with "superstition, popery, or aristocracy." Now a prosperous, democratic nation required a national standard of architectural taste. How was this taste to be improved?

Cheap popular works on architecture in all its bearings, popular lectures, popular engravings — and hundreds of them, and yet all good — these are the simple, truthful and effective means that are to influence the public, by supplying a medium through which it may see clearly, and thus be led to criticize freely, prefer wisely, and act judiciously.²⁹

The illustrations for <u>Villas and Cottages</u>, "all good," were engraved by Anderson (Fig. 6). Vaux recognized the importance of wood engravings for the communication of his ideals, and was pleased that this medium now made possible the diffusion of his ideas and the furtherance of taste in the United States:

It has not, certainly, till within the last few years, been an easy matter to place before the public the necessary illustrations in a convenient form, and as mere verbal descriptions of plans or designs are seldom thoroughly intelligible, this difficulty has probably retarded the diffusion of popular architectural information. Now, however, with the present rapid development and general application of the art of wood-engraving in the United States, this hindrance no longer exists, and a fair field is open for the free communication of ideas among American architects, and for the profitable interchange of hints and suggestions.³⁰

In summary, Alexander Anderson's work was important to the dissemination of the ideals of his century. His contemporaries found him to be significant because his art coincided with the philosophies of the nineteenth century. In a new democracy, he provided a means for mass illustration of books; in an age that believed in the unlimited social benefit of education, he offered pictorial material that was essential to current educational thought; for an era that hoped to raise individual morality, he provided visual models of the good; in response to the demands for an American art, he offered designs to stimulate and improve the nation's taste; for the Age of the Common Man, he engraved its optimistic visions. Europeans watched the new nation with fascination. And Anderson was included in their observations. In 1858, the London Art Journal published a "Bicgraphical Notice of Alexander Anderson" by Lossing, to which the editors prefaced these comments:

. . . the following interesting memoir of a veteran in Art — the pioneer in whose steps so many gifted men have followed; it will be read by many, in the Old World as well as in the New, with much interest, and may be regarded as a contribution to the Art-history of America of no inconsiderable importance. The Arts have indeed made very great advances in the United States since this veteran commenced his career; happily, he is living to witness the progress his country has made, not only in the comparatively subordinate art

of the engraver, but in that of the sculptor and the painter. The artists of America are assuming a position of entire equality with their brethren in Europe; and we cannot doubt that the generation which is to succeed such labourers as Dr. Anderson, will have their full share of glory in the triumphs of their countrymen. A time will come — perhaps is already come — when the artist, whose name now honours our pages, will be classed among that of the worthies who have made a country GREAT.³¹

Wood engraving was of prime importance in the development and diffusion of nineteenth-century ideals. It was not an originator of concepts or philosophies, but it provided a means for ideas to reach and influence a popular audience. And the fact that visual ideas could be mass-produced in turn influenced the thought of such men as Calvert Vaux and Emma Willard. It is now a nearly-forgotten craft, whose importance fades in the light of photographic printing. But for its brief period of influence, one which coincided with the career of Anderson, it was an essential part of American life. In 1872, with the era of wood engraving almost over, his contemporaries could agree with Lossing's reflections on the past century:

And I believe it is not unreasonable to claim for the Art of Wood Engraving in our day, as an element of power, a place in the grand procession of civilization next to that of printing. And in the records of that noble work — the elevation of the race — the name of Alexander Anderson will appear luminous. 32

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 - ³<u>lbid.</u>, p. 20.
 - ⁴Frederick M. Burr, <u>Life and Works of Alexander Anderson</u>, p. iii.
 - ⁵Artist's Repository and Drawing Magazine, II, p. 162.
- ⁶Charles W. Sanders, <u>The School Reader: Second Book: Containing Easy Progressive Lessons in Reading and Spelling</u> (New York: Ivison, Phinney, & Co., 1853), p. v.
- ⁷Letter, Washington Allston to George Flagg, 29 Oct., 1840, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Dreer Collection.
- ⁸Quoted in Daniel Boorstein, <u>The Americans: The Colonial Experience</u> (New York: Random House, 1958), p. 329.
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 - 11 <u>Ibid</u>., p. 263.
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- ¹⁵ "Diary, " 2 Sep. 1797.
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 - 24 Ibid., p. 6.
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 - ²⁸Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar," in <u>Selections from</u>

Ralph Waldo Emerson, ed. by Stephen Whicher (Boston: Riverside Press, 1960), p. 79.

- ²⁹Calvert Vaux, <u>Villas and Cottages: A Series of Designs Prepared for Execution in the United States</u> (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1857), pp. 28, 31.
 - 30<u>lbid.</u>, pp. 44-45.
- 31 Benson J. Lossing, "Biographical Notice of Alexander Anderson," <u>The Art Journal</u>, N. S. 4 (1858), pp. 271–272.
 - 32 Lossing, Alexander Anderson, p. 84.



West Point, Hudson River.



Catskill Mountain House.

Fig. 1. From
William Channing Woodbridge
A System of Universal Geography (1831)



Fig. 2. From George Brewer The Juvenile Lavater (1815)

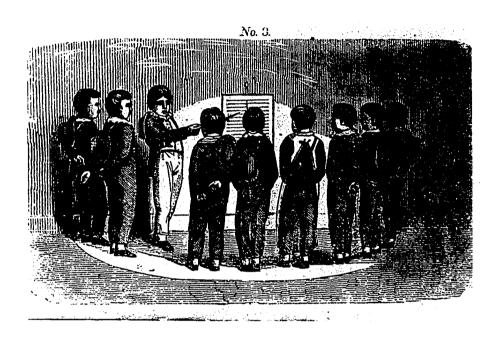


Fig. 3. From Joseph Lancaster The British System of Education (1812)



Fig. 4. Frontispiece from Rensselaer Bentley The Pictorial Reader (1847)



Fig. 5. "Cabinetmaking" From Rensselaer Bentley The Pictorial Reader (1847)

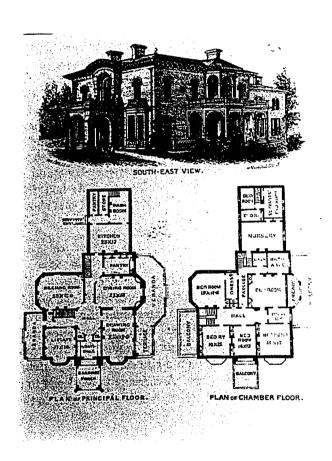


Fig. 6. From Calvert Vaux Villas and Cottages (1857)

Chapter IV

An American Style

In his 1872 <u>Memorial</u> to Anderson, Benson Lossing observed that Anderson studied Bewick closely, and he imitated his style faithfully, for he perceived in it the true spirit of wood engraving. During his long practice of the art he was never tempted to depart from it.¹

This statement summarizes Anderson's strengths, and also his ultimate weakness. With his knowledge of numerous graphic processes and the conscious study and imitation of the English prototypes, Anderson developed a technique that did express the qualities of the wood medium. His engravings are direct and immediate, fulfilling their primary role as adjuncts to the text. For Anderson, illustrations were to amplify the intent of the author, not to divert the attention of the reader by elaborate visual display. Moreover, for him and many of his contemporaries, both picture and written word had functions beyond their role as works of art; they served to educate the nation and to elevate the American character. Anderson's style satisfied these requirements. It had direct visual appeal, but with a simplicity of engraving that did not obscure the moral within the image nor compete with the surrounding text.

But his weakness was never to depart from this technique after it had passed out of popular favor. Taste had changed and Americans came to prefer a greater elegance and sheen than was possible with wood engraving. Although Anderson's work was a factor in establishing artistic preferences, he proved unable to adapt to the newer fashions. He remained true to Bewick, but American taste did not.

In contrast to most engraving techniques, which are intaglio processes, wood engraving is a relief process; all printing is effected by the surface of the block. This characteristic enables the illustration to be printed simultaneously with the type for the text, and furnishes the primary advantage of the technique. But certain limitations also result. The fineness of line is determined by the grain and strength of the wood used. Beyond a certain point, the wood will not withstand the pressure of printing and inking, and the thin wood ridges of the block will collapse. This physical limitation is a primary determinant of the quality of the finished print: firm, solid blacks surrounded by negative spaces of varying thickness. Delicacy can only be suggested in the non-printed areas rather than through the inked lines themselves.

Copper-plate line-engraving, an intaglio process, allows for completely different effects. The engraved line is the printing medium and transmits the ink to paper under high pressure; the surface, wiped clean of ink, is negative. Thus, the fineness of line is limited only by the skill of the engraver, not by the working surface. And a greater range of lines is possible, varying in depth, width, and internal modulation. The finished print can display a great delicacy of line, while the possible variations allow for displays of texture, surface, and light effects. The range of available effects goes far beyond the direct, relief process of engraving on wood, and the engraver's skill can command greater interest than the subject matter of the print.

While primarily a wood engraver, Anderson was familiar with the intaglio processes. Examples of both his engravings and etchings exhibit the ability and control of a proficient craftsman. The etched "Anatomical Study" of 1799 (Fig. 7) displays some of his capabilities on metal. The size of the plate is in itself impressive: two feet by four. The body is modeled in light and shade, with exposed internal organs clearly drawn and etched to permit detailed examination. With his use of precise, firm lines, Anderson succeeded in suggesting the different textures represented. Intended for medical study, the print is an American representation of both medical knowledge and engraving ability at the end of the eighteenth century.

Although clearly capable as a metal engraver, and aware of that medium's possibilities, Anderson preferred the wood block, and during the nineteenth century he largely restricted himself to that technique. As noted previously, wood engraving permits inexpensive, voluminous reproductions for a mass market. The nineteenth century saw the rise of a demand for popular illustrated literature, and it was to this interest that Anderson gave himself for seven decades. The requirements and limitations of surface printing result in an immediacy and directness of expression; although subtle use of line is restricted, simplicity and direct narrative expression are encouraged. The characteristics of wood engraving coincided with the interests of the popular audience. Americans could reject native, serious literature: Herman Melville's Moby Dick (1851) was a failure in the nineteenth century. But the illustrated editions of writers such as Mrs. Barbauld (Cat.36-42) met with far greater success. Although designed for children, these popular works express the values and interests of their era. William Goodwin, writer and publisher of children's books, observed to Charles Lamb that it is children who read children's books, when they read, but it is parents who chose them.²

Notwithstanding the vast output of Anderson, a discussion of a few of his illustrations will indicate the style of wood engraving which he fostered and which achieved such great success during his lifetime. In 1873, Illustrations of Mother Goose's Melodies (Cat. 344) was published in New York. In the Introductory Notice, Evert Duyckinck attempted to establish Mother Goose as a distinct American character, whose rhymes were first published by Thomas Fleet of Boston in 1719. The illustrations, both designed and engraved by Anderson, also indicate the American engraving style. They are straight-forward, their narrarive can be understood at a glance, and they reflect the contemporary values of those who chose children's books. "There was a mad mad" is illustrated by a small cut that quickly summarizes the story of the mad man who "madly away did ride" (Fig. 8). The eyes of the parents are wide with insanity as they ride from the burning house in the background to the precipice ahead. Although the text offers no explanation for the scene, Anderson saw fit

to include one within his design. An empty bottle is placed clearly in the foreground; a lesson on the evils of drink is given with only a few additional lines. But its inclusion characterizes both Anderson's work and the expectations of the nineteenth century toward art.

The rhyme "One misty, misty morning" is also included in the 1873 volume. The accompanying cut (Fig. 9) again quickly summarizes the story, here a polite boy using the formal greetings taught by his elders. There is no attempt at convincing modeling, nor at the development of elaborate space. But however simple, the narration and figures can be immediately understood, and the whole presents an attractive visual image. While lacking complexity, the people and objects portrayed do attest to the artist's skill and to his ability to suggest a variety of details with only a few lines. The polite boy is poised and well-dressed, complete with top hat and tailed coat. In contrast, the figure near him is rough, unkempt, and clearly not among the favored and happy of this world. Although done with a few lines, the contrast of materials and features is convincing and readily perceived. Characteristically, while illustrating the verse Anderson includes a didactic allusion: manners and good behavior ensure success. To the nineteenth century the formula was reasonable, and Anderson's style was well-suited for its development.

Although Anderson copied the designs of English illustrators for the majority of his cuts, he usually made slight alterations. A comparison of the English model and Anderson's copy, done early in his career, indicates the preferences and attitudes of the American engraver. The seventh edition of Robert Bloomfield's The Farmer's Boy; A Rural Poem was published in London in 1803; in the same year Hopkins & Seymour of New York published the fifth American edition (Cat. 81). The frontispiece of the London volume was designed by Thurston and cut by Nesbit (Fig. 10); the same design, engraved by Anderson, appears in the American edition (Fig. 11). Anderson's major change is the substitution of a church in the right background, in place of Thurston's picturesque ruins. The London design used the upper branches of

the tree to close off the picture space, while Anderson's design was left open. The inclusion of the church perhaps implies Anderson's personal concern with religion; the changes in the upper section of the tree result in a less successful composition and indicate the artist's lack of formal training. These compositional alterations suggest that Anderson did not consider himself to be merely a slavish copier of foreign works. Using these illustrations both as models and as a means for his own artistic education, he made changes, albeit minor, when he wished to heighten an effect or an attitude implicit in the original.

In addition to these changes, differences in technique are also apparent. Anderson's water surface is more simply delineated, as is the facial structure of the shepherd boy. While Nesbit used thin, closely spaced lines to develop form and texture, Anderson avoided this precise style, using fewer, broader lines to create surfaces and planes. This technique requires less dexterity, and reflects a degree of caution and uncertainty on the part of the American craftsman. The result is less contrast between white and black, less tonal variety, and an overall duller, washed out appearance. As his career and abilities progressed, Anderson did use more closely spaced, finely cut lines, but he never abandoned completely the tendency toward simplification and sparseness of statement that characterized his early work.

Anderson's developed technique is evidenced by his cuts for the 1810 New York publication of The Poems of Ossian (Cat. 418), the work of James MacPherson and the center of considerable literary controversy during the early nineteenth century. The illustrations given here (Figs. 12, 13) typify the style that Anderson will continue for the next sixty years. The image is usually dominated by one or two central figures, which are surrounded by relatively few, dramatically lighted narrative details. Complexity of composition or drawing is avoided, with emphasis on immediacy of comprehension rather than intricacies of symbolism or draftsmanship. The prints display contrasts of light and dark, but with little attention to subtle gradations between the extremes. These simplifications permit the viewer to comprehend the

illustrations quickly, without lengthy distractions from the accompanying text. Although visually attractive and constituting an important addition to a book, the engravings are not intended to compete with the text. Anderson understood the limitations of book illustrations and remained within these boundaries.

The style and techniques developed by Anderson dominated American wood engraving throughout the nineteenth century, persisting long after the medium was superseded in popularity by steel engravings. The prototype for the school was the work of Thomas Bewick, freely taken and constantly admired as a model. In his own work, Anderson tended to simplify and reduce details; this resulted in prints which could be readily understood, and afforded the viewer a maximum of pleasure with a minimum of effort. The visual statement was direct, concise, and unencumbered with ambiguities. But while this simplified style met with popular approval, it was harshly criticized by more demanding patrons. A. J. Downing (Cat. 177–180) sought greater attention to secondary details and found Anderson's simplifications of composition and tonality to be unsatisfactory. In a letter to A. J. Davis, Downing instructed his associate to "throw in as much foliage as possible and produce a strong effect of light and shade in the drawing," as he found "Anderson deficient" on these points. 4

Although criticized on occasion, Anderson's abilities met with general acclaim from his contemporaries. He developed a graphic technique for a new, self-conscious nation, and provided the means for the tremendous increase in the publication of illustrated works in the nineteenth century. His style was without pretention: it gave immediate visual expression to the popular concerns of his countrymen.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Frederick Burr noted the achievement of Alexander Anderson and the significance of a career that spanned three-quarters of a century:

Such was the beginning of wood-engraving in this country. A poor medical student, with rude tools, manufactured by an ordinary blacksmith, sustained only by his native genius, and but scantily remunerated, laid, in the face of the greatest difficulties, the foundations of the art that now occupies so prominent a position in the amusement and instruction of millions.⁵

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- ³Illustrations of Mother Goose's Melodies. Designed and Engraved on Wood by Alexander Anderson, M. D., with an Introductory Notice by Evert A. Duyckinck (New York: Privately printed by Charles L. Moreau, 1873), pp. 4-5.
- ⁴Letter, A. J. Downing to A. J. Davis, 27 May 1842, Metropolitan Museum of Art, A. J. Davis papers.
 - ⁵Frederick M. Burr, Life and Works of Alexander Anderson, pp.31-32.

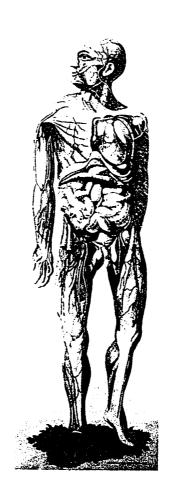


Fig. 7. Anatomical Study



Fig. 8. "Mad Man"
From Illustrations of Mother Goose's Melodies (1873)



Fig. 9. "Misty Morning"
From Illustrations of Mother Goose's Melodies (1873)



Fig. 10. Nesbit's Frontispiece From <u>The Farmer's Boy</u> (London, 1803)



Fig. 11. Anderson's Frontispiece From <u>The Farmer's Boy</u> (New York, 1803)



CARRIC-THURA. Vol. 1, p. 228.

Fig. 12. "Carric-Thura" From James MacPherson Poems of Ossian (1810)



THE WAR OF CAROS. Vol. 1, p. 323.

Fig. 13. "The War of Caros" From James MacPherson Poems of Ossian (1810)

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APPENDIX

Catalog of Published Works

The following catalog lists those works published before 1900 that include illustrations by Alexander Anderson. Many of the prints bear the engraver's name or initials; others have been identified by entries in his Diary, citation within the title or text of the book, or by comparison with prints in works where the attribution has been established. In compiling this catalog, d'Alte A. Welch's <u>Bibliography of American Children's Books</u>, A. S. W. Rosenbach's <u>Early American Children's Books</u>, and Sinclair Hamilton's <u>Early American Book Illustrations and Wood Engravers 1670–1870</u>, have been indispensible, as has the work of countless librarians in researching and cataloging their own holdings.

The entries include the author when known, or when an attribution has been made by standard bibliographies. Titles occasionally have been abbreviated. Letters following the publishing data refer to the major repositories where that volume may be located. These libraries are:

AAS: American Antiquarian Society

NYPL: New York Public Library

PrU: Princeton University Library

YC: Yale University Library

- 1. <u>Abbas, Louisa Veneni, Flavia, Theodosius and Constantia Eugenio, &c.</u> New York: William Hunt, n.d.
- 2. Abentheuerliche Ereignisse . . . Chambersburg, Pa.: 1839. PrU.
- Adams, Thomas F. Typographia: A Brief Sketch of the Origin, Rise, and Progress of the Typographic Art; with Practical Directions for Conducting Every
 Department in an Office. Philadelphia: Printed and Published by the Compiler, 1837. PrU.
- 4. Address of the Executive Committee of the American Tract Society to the Christian Public, The. New York: American Tract Society [1825]. YC.
- 5. Address to a Child. New York: New York Religious Tract Society, 1824. PrU.
- 6. Aesop. Aesop's Fables. New York: Samuel Wood, 1814.
- 7. Aesop. Aesop's Fables, Translated into English, with a Print before Each Fable.

 <u>Abridged for the Amusement & Instruction of Youth</u>. Cooperstown: H. & E.

 Phinney, 1836. PrU.
- 8. Aesop. <u>Aesop's Fables: with His Life, Morals and Remarks; Amusement Blended with Instruction</u>. New Haven: Increase Cooke & Co., 1807. PrU.
- 9. [Aikin, John] The Calendar of Nature: Designed for the Instruction and Entertainment of Young Persons. New York: Samuel Wood & Sons, 1815. AAS, NYPL, PrU.
- 10. Aikin, John. <u>The Calendar of Nature: Designed for the Instruction and Entertainment of Young Persons</u>. New York: Samuel Wood & Sons; Baltimore: Samuel S. Wood & Co. [c.1823].
- [Aikin, John, and Anna Letitia Barbauld]. <u>The Farm-Yard Journal. Also, the Histories of the Cat and Mouse. Ornamented with Plates</u>. New York: Thomas Powers, 1810. AAS.
- 12. Akinside, Dr. <u>The Pleasures of Imagination</u>. Portland, Me.: Thomas B. Wait & Co., 1807. PrU.
- 13. Alger, Israel, Jr. The Pronouncing Bible. The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments, Translated out of the Original Tongues, and with the Former Translations Diligently Compared and Revised. The Proper Names of Which, and Numerous Other Words, being Accurately Accented in the Text and Divided into Syllables, as they ought to be Pronounced, According to the Orthography of John Walker . . . Boston: Lincoln & Edmunds, 1828.
- 14. Allan, John. <u>A Catalogue of the Books, Autographs, Engravings, and Miscellaneous Articles, belonging to the Late John Allan</u>. New York: C. A. Alverd, 1864. NYPL.
- 15. Allen Crane, the Gold Seeker. Troy, N.Y.: Merriam, Moore & Co. [c. 1851-56]. PrU.
- 16. Always Happy: or, Anacdotes of Felix, and His Sister Serena....
 New York: William B. Gilley, 1816. PrU.

- 17. American Domestic Cookery, The. By a Lady. New York: E. Duyckinck, n.d.
- 18. American Ladies & Gentlemens Pocket Almanac and Belles Lettres Repository for 1802, The. New York: David Longworth [1801]. PrU.
- 19. American Mock-bird, The: or, Cabinet of Anacreon. Being a Selection of the Most Elegant and Fashionable Songs New York: David Longworth, 1801. AAS.
- 20. <u>Americanischer Stadt und Land Calender auf das 1812te Jahr Christi</u>.... Philadelphia: Conrad Zentler [1811]. PrU.
- 21. Anacreon. <u>Odes . . . translated by Thomas Moore</u> . . . Second American, from the Third London Edition. New York: D. Longworth, 1805. AAS.
- 22. Anderson, Alexander. American Engravings. [New York, 18--]. NYPL
- 23. Anderson, Alexander. <u>Book of Ciphers</u>. [Imprint, no publisher given. NYHS].
- 24. Anderson, Alexander. A Collection of One Hundred and Seventy Engravings by Alexander Anderson, M.D. Executed on Wood after his Ninetieth Year. New York: Privately Printed by Charles L. Moreau, 1872. PrU.
- 25. Anderson, Alexander. <u>51 Woodcuts Engraved by Dr. Alexander Anderson</u>, the First American Engraver. New York: Burr & Boyd, 1876. NYPL.
- 26. Anderson, A[lexander]. A General History of Quadrupeds, the Figures Engraved on Wood, Chiefly Copied from the Originals of T. Bewick, by A. Anderson. First American Edition, with an Appendix Containing Some American Animals not Hitherto Described. New York: G. & R. Waite, 1804. PrU.
- 27. Anderson, Alexander. <u>A General History of Quadrupeds</u>. <u>The figures Engraved on Wood, Chiefly Copied from the Original of T. Bewick by A. Anderson</u>. New York: G. & R. Waite, 1804. NYPL.
- 28. Anderson, A. <u>A General History of Quadrupeds</u> Second American, from the Eighth London Edition. Also, an Addenda, with some American Animals not hitherto described. New York: J. Booth & Son, 1834.
- 29. Anderson, A. <u>A History of Quadrupeds</u> . . . Second American from the Eighth London Edition . . . New York: W. H. Graham, 1848.
- 30. Anderson, Alexander. <u>Proof Engravings by A. Anderson after Wood Cuts of Thomas and John Bewick, Illustrating "Emblems of Mortality" First Published in 1789</u>. New York, 18--. NYPL.
- 31. Anderson, Alexander. <u>Saints and Legends</u>. [Imprint. No title or publisher, binder's title only.] NYPL.
- 32. Anville, Jean Baptiste Bourguignen d'. Atlas to the Ancient Geography...

 Containing Ten Maps.... New York: R. M'Dermot & D. D. Arden,
 1814. AAS.

- 33. Baldwin, Edward. <u>Fables, Ancient and Modern, Adapted for the Use of Children</u>. First American Edition. Philadelphia: Johnson & Warner, 1811. PrU. Cf: Godwin, William.
- 34. Ball, Isaac. An Analytical View of the Animal Economy, Calculated for the Students of Medicine, as well as Private Gentlemen, Interspersed with many Allegories and Moral Reflections Drawn from the Subject, to Awaken the Mind to an Elevated Sense of the Great Author of Nature. New York: Printed for the Author by Samuel Wood, 1808.
- 35. Balmanno, Mrs. Pen and Pencil. New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1858. PrU.
- 36. Barbauld, Anna Letitia. <u>Hymns in Prose for Children</u>. Philadelphia: Benjamin Johnson, 1806.
- 37. [Barbauld, Mrs. Anna Letitia]. <u>Hymns, in Prose, for the Use of Children</u>
 ... New York: Printed and sold by Samuel Wood, 1808, 1809, 1810, 1814. AAS
- 38. [Barbauld, Mrs. Anna Letitia]. <u>Hymns, in Prose, for the Use of Children</u>... New York: Samuel Wood & Sons, 1814, 1816. AAS.
- 39. [Barbauld, Mrs. Anna Letitia]. <u>Hymns, in Prose, for the Use of Children</u>
 ... New York: Samuel Wood & Sons; Baltimore: Samuel S. Wood & Co.,
 1819. AAS.
- 40. Barbauld, [Anna Letitia]. Lessons for Children. In Four Parts . . . Improved by Cuts . . . Engraved by Dr. Anderson. Philadelphia: Benjamin Warner, 1818. AAS, NYPL, PrU.
- 41. Barbauld, Anna Letitia and Dr. John Aikin. Evenings at Home; or the Juvenile Budget Opened: Consisting of a Variety of Miscellaneous Pieces for the Instruction and Amusement of Young Persons. New Edition. Philadelphia: T. Desilver, 1831.
- 42. Barbauld, Mrs. and Dr. Aikin. <u>Evenings at Home</u>... New Edition, Illustrated by One Hundred Engravings. Philadelphia: James Hay, Jun. and Bro., n.d.
- 43. Barrington, Daines. <u>The Possibility of Approaching the North Pole Asserted</u>
 ... New York: James Eastburn, 1818. AAS.
- 44. Beattie, James. The Minstrel; or, The Progress of Genius. In Two Books.

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- 45. Beattie, James. The Minstrel, or, The Progress of Genius . . . Also The Shipwreck. By William Falconer. New York: Collins and Co., 1812.

 AAS, PrU.
- 46. Bell, John. <u>The Anatumy and Physiology of the Human Body</u>... Third American, from the Fourth English Edition. 3 vols. New York: Printed and sold by Collins and Co., 1817. AAS.
- 47. Bentley, Rensselaer. <u>Introduction to the Pictorial Reader</u>. New York: Saxton & Mills, 1844. NYPL.

- 48. Bentley, Rensselaer. <u>Pictorial Primer</u>. New York: Robinson, Pratt & Co., 1842. NYPL.
- 49. Bentley, Rensselaer. The Pictorial Reader: Containing a Variety of Useful and Instructive Lessons upon Familiar Subjects: With Illustrations to Render Them Interesting and Attractive. New York: George F. Cooledge & Brother, 1847. NYPL.
- 50. Bentley, Rensselaer. <u>Pictorial Spelling Book</u>. New York: Robinson, Pratt & Co., 1839. NYPL.
- 51. Bentley, Rensselaer. The Pictorial Spelling Book. Containing an Improved Method of Teaching the Alphabet, and Likewise Spelling and Pronunciation by the Use of Pictures . . . Illustrated with Numerous Engravings New York: Sheldon & Co., n.d.
- 52. Berquin, M. The Children's Friend, from the French... A New Translation, with Thirty Engravings, 2 vols. New York and Boston: C. S. Francis & Company, 1860.
- 53. Berquin, M. <u>The Children's Friend. Translated from the French...</u> A New and Revised Edition. Boston: Munroe & Francis, 1833. NYPL.
- 54. [Berquin, Arnaud]. The Looking-Glass for the Mind; or, Intellectual Mirror. Being an Elegant Collection of the Most Delightful Little Stories, and Interesting Tales, chiefly Translated [by W. D. Cooper] from that much Admired Work L'Ami des Enfans. A new Edition with 36 cuts, elegantly engraved. New York: Printed by W. Durell for Edward Mitchell, 1795. NYPL. PrU.
- 55. Berquin, [Arnaud]. The Looking-Glass for the Mind. Being an Elegant Collection of Delightful and Interesting Tales . . . Ornamented with 75 Wood-Cuts. New York: David Longworth, 1800.
- 56. [Berquin, Arnaud]. <u>The Looking-Glass for the Mind; or, Intellectual Mirror</u>... <u>With Elegant Engravings on Wood, by Anderson</u>. New York: E. Duyckinck, 1804. YC.
- 57. [Berquin, Arnaud]. <u>The Looking-Glass for the Mind</u>... New York: Printed for S. Campbell, E. Duyckinck, J. Tiebout, G. & R. Waite, D. Smith, S. Stephens, J. Ronalds, & J. C. Totten. L. Nichols, printer, 1804. AAS.
- 58. [Berquin, Arnaud]. <u>The Looking-Glass for the Mind</u>... New York: Printed by M'Farlane and Long, 1807.
- 59. [Berquin, Arnaud]. The Looking-Glass for the Mind; or, Intellectual

 Mirror . . . With Elegant Engravings on Wood by Anderson. New York:

 Evert Duyckinck, 1807. NYPL, PrU.
- 60. [Berquin, Arnaud]. <u>The Looking-Glass for the Mind</u>... New York: Evert Duyckinck; George Long, 1815. AAS.
- 61. [Berquin, Arnaud]. <u>The Looking-Glass for the Mind</u>... New York: William B. Gilley, 1815.

- 62. [Berquin, Arnaud]. <u>The Looking-Glass for the Mind</u>... New York: George Long, 1816. AAS.
- 63. [Berquin, Arnaud]. <u>The Looking-Glass for the Mind</u>... New York: Evert Duyckinck, 1818.
- 64. [Berquin, Arnaud]. <u>The Looking-Glass for the Mind; or, Intellectual Mirror</u>.... Tenth New York Edition. New York: George Long, 1820. AAS.
- 65. [Berquin, Arnaud]. The Looking-Glass for the Mind; . . . New York: Evert Duyckinck, 1825. NYPL.
- 66. [Berquin, Arnaud]. The Looking-Glass for the Mind; or, Intellectual Mirror
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- 67. [Berquin, Arnaud]. The Looking-Glass for the Mind; . . . Baltimore: Parsons, Preston & Kurtz, 1846. NYPL.
- 68. [Berquin, Arnaud]. The Looking-Glass for the Mind, or, the Juvenile Friend; being a Valuable Collection of Interesting and Miscellaneous Incidents Calculated to Exhibit to Young Minds Philadelphia: Printed and sold by John Brown, 1810.
- 69. Berrian, William. The Sailors' Manual of Devotion. New York: Published for the Executive Committee of the Army and Navy Convention, 1844.
- 70. Bible Story Book; for a Good Little Boy. New Haven: S. Babcock, 1832.
- 71. Billy Gorham; The Little Infant Scholar. New Haven: S. Babcock, 1831.
- 72. Birthday Present; from an Affectionate Friend. New Haven, S. Babcock, 1831.
- 73. Bishop, Mrs. Harriet E. <u>Minnesota: Then and Now</u>. Saint Paul: D. D. Merrill, Randall & Co., 1869. PrU.
- 74. Blackbird's Nest, The. . . . Newark, N. J.: Benjamin Olds, 1820. AAS.
- 75. Blake, Rev. J. L. Biblical Reader. Boston: 1826. NYPL.
- 76. <u>Blind Susan, or the Affectionate Family. By M. of Lowell</u>. New York: Mahlon Day, 1835.
- 77. Bloomfield, Robert. <u>The Farmer's Boy: A Rural Poem, in Four Books</u>. London: Printed at T. Bensley for Vernon and Hood, 1800. NYPL.
- 78. Bloomfield, Robert. <u>The Farmer's Boy: A Rural Poem</u>... The First American Edition. Ornamented with Elegant Wood Engravings, by A. Anderson. New York: Printed and Sold by George F. Hopkins, 1801. AAS, PrU.
- 79. Bloomfield, Robert. <u>The Farmer's Boy: A Rural Poem</u>. The Fourth American Edition. New York: G. & R. Waite, 1801. AAS, PrU.
- 80. Bloomfield, Robert. <u>The Farmer's Boy: A Rural Poem</u>. 7th ed. London: Vernon and Hood, 1803. NYPL.
- 81. Bloomfield, Robert. The Farmer's Boy: A Rural Poem Ornamented with Elegant Wood Engravings, by A. Anderson. 5th American, from 6th London Edition. New York: Hopkins & Seymour, 1803. AAS, NYPL, PrJ.

- 82. Bloomfield, Robert. The Poems of Robert Bloomfield. In Two Parts: Part I.
 The Farmer's Boy. Part II. Rural Tales. Burlington, N. J.: Printed for
 David Allinson, by Stephen C. Ustick, 1803. AAS, PrU.
- 83. Bloomfield, Robert. The Poems of Robert Bloomfield. In Two Parts. Part I.

 The Farmer's Boy. Part II. Rural Tales. New York: J. D. Myers and W.

 Smith, 1821. PrU.
- 84. Bloomfield, Robert. <u>Rural Tales</u>, <u>Ballads and Songs</u>... The Third Edition. n.p., 1803.
- 85. Bloomfield, Robert. <u>Rural Tales, etc.... Ornamented with Wood Engravings by Anderson</u>. New York: T. J. Swords, 1802. AAS.
- 86. Bloomfield, Robert. <u>Wild Flowers: or, Pastoral and Local Poetry</u>. Philadelphia: Jacob Johnson, 1806.
- 87. Bodsley, Robert. <u>Oeconomy Oder Haushaltungskunst des Menschlichen Lebens</u>. New Edition. Philadelphia: Johnson & Warner, 1809. NYPL.
- 88. Bogatzky, C. H. V. A Golden Treasury, for the Children of God, Whose Treasure is in Heaven; Consisting of Select Texts of the Bible, with Practical Observations in Prose and Verse, for Every Day in the Year. New York: Printed by Wilson & Kirk . . . for the New-York Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and Piety, 1797. PrU.
- 89. <u>Book Full of Pictures</u>, A. <u>With Interesting Explanations to Each</u>. New Haven: S. Babcock; Charleston, S. C.: S. Babcock & Co., 1830. PrU, YC.
- 90. <u>Book of Bible Stories</u>. A <u>Present for a Good Scholar</u>. New Haven: S. Babcock, 1840, 1842.
- 91. Book of Cuts, Designed for the Amusement & Instruction of Young People.

 New York: Mahlon Day, 1823, 1828.
- 92. <u>Book of Stories; or, Allegorical Instruction and Entertainment for Children, from Animated Creation</u>. New York: Mahlon Day, 1830. PrU.
- 93. Boston Musical Miscellany: A Selection of Songs, Sentimental, Anacreontic, Humorous, Amatory, and National. Boston: J. T. Buckingham, 1815.
- 94. Botta, Charles. <u>History of the War of the Independence of the United States of America</u>... <u>Translated from the Italian by George Alexander Otis</u>. Eighth Edition, in Two Volumes, Revised and Corrected. New Haven: Nathan Whiting [cop. 1836]. PrU.
- 95. Botta, Charles. <u>History of the War of Independence of the United States of America</u>... 9th Edition, in Two Volumes, Revised and Corrected. Cooperstown: E. Phinney, 1845. NYPL.
- 96. <u>Boy's Book of Sports, The: or, Exercises and Pastimes of Youth</u>. New Haven: S. Babcock, 1838. PrU.
- 97. Boyssiere, Pierre. <u>Conversion de Pierre Boyssiere a la Véritable Réligion</u>
 <u>Chrétienne, et motif de sa séparation de l'Eglise Romaine</u>....[Pamphlet; n.p., n.d.].

- 98. Branagan, Thomas. <u>Political and Theological Disquisitions on the Signs of the Times, Relative to the Present Conquests of France</u>. Trenton, N. J.: Printed for the Author, 1807.
- 99. Brewer, Geo. <u>The Juvenile Lavater; or, a Familiar Explanation of the Passions of Le Brun</u>. New York: R. M. M'Dermot & D. D. Arden, 1815. NYPL.
- 100. <u>Brief Memoir of the Life of Dr. Benjamin Franklin</u>, with an Appendix. <u>Compiled for the Use of Young Persons</u>. New York: Printed and sold by Mahlon Day, 1824.
- 101. [Budden, Mrs. Maria E.]. Always Happy: or, Anecdotes of Felix, and His Sister Serena. A Tale. Written for Her Children. By a Mother. From the Second London Edition. New York: William B. Gilley, 1816. AAS.
- 102. <u>Budget, The. Consisting of Pieces, Both Instructive and Amusing, for Young Persons</u>, Philadelphia: A. Fagan for Johnson & Warner, 1813.
- 103. <u>Budget of Stories, The. Intended for Little Boys and Girls</u>. New Haven: S. Babcock; Charleston, S. C.: S. Babcock & Co., 1830. YC.
- 104. Bunyan, John. The Holy War, Made by King Shaddai upon Diabolus, for the Regaining of the Metropolis of the World; or, the Losing and Taking Again of the Town of Mansoul. New York: Lewis Nichols for Evert Duyckinck, 1805. PrU.
- 105. Bunyan, John. <u>Ka hele Malihini Ana Mai Keia ae Aku a Hiki Kela ae</u>
 ... [Pilgrim's Progress translated into Hawaiian by Bishop Artemas.]
 Honolulu: 1842. NYPL.
- 106. Bunyan, John. The Pilgrim's Progress, from This World to that Which is to Come: Delivered under the Similitude of a Dream, in Three Parts....

 New York: H. Gaine, 1794. PrU.
- 107. Bunyan, John. <u>The Pilgrim's Progress</u>, . . . New York: Printed for John Tiebout, by L. Nichols, 1804. PrU.
- 108. Bunyan, John. <u>The Pilgrim's Progress</u>, . . . Boston: Joseph Bumstead, 1806. AAS, PrU.
- 109. Bunyan, John. <u>The Pilgrim's Progress</u>... A New Edition, Divided into Chapters, with the Life of the Author, to Which are Added Explanatory and Poetical Notes. Embellished with Elegant Engravings. New York: John Tiebout, 1811.
- 110. Bunyan, John. <u>The Pilgrim's Progress</u>, ... <u>With Copious Notes by Rev</u>. J. Newton, Dr. Hawker, and Others. Boston: Isaiah Thomas, 1817. PrU.
- 111. Bunyan, John. <u>The Pilarim's Progress</u>, . . . Elizabethtown, N. J.: Mervin Hale, 1818. AAS, PrU.
- 112. Bunyan, John. <u>The Pilgrim's Progress</u>, . . . Newark, N. J.: Benjamin Olds, 1818, 1819.

- 113. Bunyan, John. <u>The Pilgrim's Progress</u>, . . . New York: American Tract Society [1832].
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