

A Forgotten Mountain: Jasper F. Cropsey's Paintings of Sugar Loaf

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JASPER F. CROPSEY'S paintings of Sugar Loaf Mountain are among the most problematic of his works. The subject of many of these paintings has often been incorrectly identified because the geographic area is unfamiliar to both art historians and dealers; only three paintings with "Sugar Loaf" in the title are documented through exhibition or auction records.¹ An even more important factor, however, is that the artist took great liberties with his subject. Cropsey's portrayals of the mountain appear much more similar to one another than to the actual topography of the site: certainly, in terms of scale and contour, the prominent peak in his works does not closely resemble the one that rises in the Warwick Valley, Orange County, New York. Small wonder, then, that the title and subject of Cropsey's fall scene in *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, known as *Autumn Landscape, Mount Chocorua, New Hampshire* (Figure 1), has not been challenged since the Museum acquired the painting in 1961.

Lent by the dealer Victor Spark as *Mount Chocorua* to the exhibition "Artists in the White Mountains" at the Currier Gallery of Art in 1955, *Autumn Landscape* was advertised later that year by John Graham & Sons under the same "Mount Chocorua" title.² When William S. Talbot included the piece in his major exhibition of Cropsey's work in 1970, suggesting a date of about 1872 on stylistic grounds, he did not question the title, although he did note that the artist "made the peak a bit higher and more rounded than it actually appears."³ Nor was the identification contested in the 1985 catalogue of American paintings in *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*.⁴ While the Museum's painting shows a mountain that is indeed similar to Mount Chocorua as depicted here in Sanford R. Gifford's *Summer Afternoon* (Figure 2), its actual subject is Sugar Loaf Mountain, which rises in the Warwick Valley (Figure 3).

There are a number of reasons to reject Mount Chocorua as the mountain in the Museum's painting.⁵ Only twice during Cropsey's lifetime did he exhibit paintings of this subject;⁶ and although the renowned White Mountain peak, which the artist sketched in 1852 and 1855, was a popular subject among the Hudson River School painters, no major paintings by Cropsey of Mount Chocorua appear to have survived.⁷ In his known drawings and smaller oil studies (e.g., Figures 4 and 5), Cropsey carefully retained the distinctive pyramidal shape and massiveness of Mount Chocorua as it rises dramatically over the surrounding wilderness. These compositions show the continual and gradual ascent of the mountain's profile from the foothills on the left, then an abrupt breaking off into an almost hooklike form at the apex, and a descent into a broken series of smaller peaks to the right. By contrast, Cropsey's paintings of Sugar Loaf show a more gently rounded form—even though the height of the peak is greatly exaggerated—almost symmetrical in shape, situated within a pastoral setting.

In 1866, the year after his greatest financial success, Cropsey purchased a large tract of land approximately two miles south of Warwick, New York, an area considered "an ideal spot for country homes"⁸—and not far from Sugar Loaf. The artist knew the region well; its scenic beauty had attracted him at the beginning of his career as a painter. At nearby West Milford, New Jersey, he had met Maria Cooley, whom he married in 1847. During his early courtship he painted local sites such as Greenwood Lake and Lake Wawayanda, subjects to which he would return throughout his life. It is not surprising, therefore, that Cropsey, once he thought he was financially secure, built a twenty-nine-room mansion of his own design (Figure 6) near his earliest sketching grounds and his wife's family home. Completed in 1869, Cropsey's magnificent retreat, called Aladdin, included a reception room, drawing room, billiard room, conservatory, and a large (thirty-foot-square) studio. Windows on the north, east, and west sides of his home carefully framed the exterior landscape, which was also reflected in large mirrors placed on opposite

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Figure 1. Jasper F. Cropsey (1823–1900). *Autumn Landscape, Sugar Loaf Mountain, New York* (previously titled *Autumn Landscape, Mount Chocorua, New Hampshire*), n.d. Oil on canvas, 28½ x 35½ in. (72.4 x 90.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Bertram F. and Susie Brummer Foundation, Inc., Gift, 1961 (61.262). See also Colorplate 4

walls.⁹ From his property, named by the Indians “Noonantum,” meaning either “the hill of joy” or “a beautiful view,”¹⁰ Cropsey could see Mounts Adam and Eve and Sugar Loaf, as well as distant views of the Shawangunks and the Catskills. For the next fifteen years, he painted the countryside near his home, which was described by a contemporary writer as “one of the most . . . Arcadian regions of the United States.”¹¹ Earlier in his career Cropsey had traveled widely throughout the eastern United States to gather material for painting, but there is no evidence that while living at “Aladdin” he journeyed far from home for his subjects.¹²

Sugar Loaf rises only 1,226 feet above sea level. The rocky mountain of graywacke slate is known for its conical form resembling an old-fashioned loaf of sugar. As a local historian noted, “Its abrupt bald peak gives it an individuality,” allowing it to serve as a beacon that is “visible and quickly recognized from many points in the

county.”¹³ In his paintings of this uniquely shaped formation, Cropsey emphasized the bare, rocky contour of the mountain, today covered by secondary growth. But even in the nineteenth century, the mountain was not completely barren of foliage, and its upper stony surface was described as “covered with a woody top-knot or crest, which gives it a pleasant and gay appearance.”¹⁴

The popular nineteenth-century writer N. P. Willis thought that the mountain as viewed from the nearby Chester Hills to the southwest resembled not a sugar loaf but “a crouching lion ready to spring upon its prey.”¹⁵ Sugar Loaf is seen from this direction in an engraving that appeared in the *Harper’s New York and Erie Rail-Road Guide Book* in 1851 (Figure 7). This view and another engraving in the guide showing the mountain seen from the north, near Oxford (Figure 8), are the only known images of the mountain contemporaneous with Cropsey’s drawings and paintings.



Figure 2. Sanford R. Gifford (1823–1880). *Summer Afternoon*, 1855. Oil on canvas, 29 x 41 in. (73.7 x 104.1 cm) (oval spandrel). The Newark Museum, Newark, N.J., Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Orrin W. June, 1961, 61.10 (photo: The Newark Museum/Art Resource, N.Y.)



Figure 3. Panoramic view of Mine Hill, Brimstone Mountain, Sugar Loaf Mountain, Goosepond Mountain, and Snake Mountain, looking north from the base of Bellvale Mountain on Lake Road (photo: Nick Zungoli, Sugar Loaf, N.Y.)

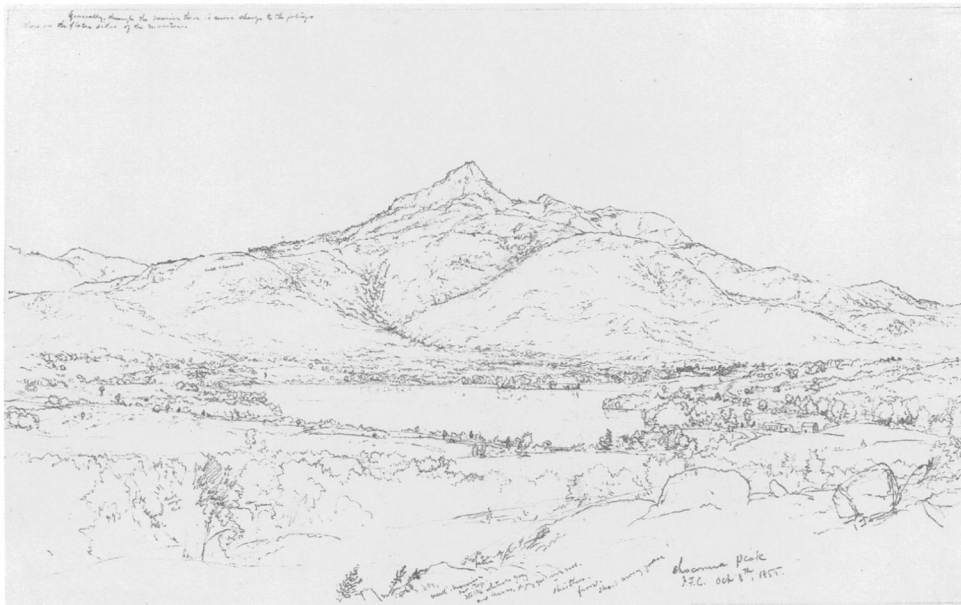


Figure 4. Cropsey. *View of Mount Chocorua*, October 8, 1855. Pencil on paper, 10 x 16¼ in. (25.5 x 40.6 cm). Collection of Michael J. Ettner (photo: © Michael J. Ettner)



Figure 5. Cropsey. *Lake at Mount Chocorua*, 1875. Oil on canvas, 12¾ x 20½ in. (31.4 x 51.1 cm). Collection of Mrs. John C. Newington (photo: courtesy The Newington-Cropsey Foundation)

Cropsey's pencil studies reveal the extent of the liberties taken in his paintings of Sugar Loaf. His surviving drawings of the mountain are sited from the south, closer to "Aladdin," looking north. Although they are dated later than many of his paintings of Sugar Loaf, the drawings are valuable because they accurately portray the topography of the region and demonstrate that Cropsey was scrupulously accurate in transcribing nature in his sketches, despite the distortions or rearrangements of the natural landscape that he might have made in his paintings. Early in his career, the young artist had reminded himself to study the natural world faithfully. "In fact," he wrote, "if greatness is the aim, there should be no study made

without care by close attention, the eye discovers beauties, & the hand acquires an accuracy [*sic*] & facility it would not otherwise gain."¹⁶

One of the drawings, from a sketchbook inscribed 1875 containing sketches dating from 1875–76, shows Sugar Loaf in a view that looks north from Bellvale Mountain (Figure 9). The vista was rapturously described in Frank Forester's book *Warwick Woodlands*, written in 1830 but first published in 1845. Describing the view looking down from Bellvale Mountain to the valley basin below, with Sugar Loaf in the distance, Forester wrote: "Never did I see a landscape more extensively magnificent . . . girdled on every side by mountains—the whole diversified with wood and

water, meadow, and pasture-land, and corn-field—studded with small white villages—with more than one bright lakelet glittering like beaten gold in the declining sun, and several isolated hills standing up boldly from the vale!”¹⁷ The quickly rendered study from Cropsey’s sketchbook, inscribed “Sugar Loaf & Wickham pond from top of Belvale [*sic*],” emphasizes the forested profiles of the distant mountains and omits the pastoral details of the panorama that Forester described: Cropsey telescopically reduced the space in the drawing so that the mountain appears close to the viewer.

Cropsey produced two other drawings near the edge of Wickham Lake, on consecutive days in 1878. These describe the landscape more meticulously. The drawing dated October 25 shows the east side of the lake with Snake Mountain in the distance (Figure 10). In the upper left-hand corner of the drawing, he recorded the west side of the lake, in effect completing a panorama of its northern shore and the distant mountains. Returning the next day, Cropsey made a more detailed drawing of this view, which shows Sugar Loaf Mountain in the center of the composition, the smaller Brimstone Mountain to the left, and Mine Hill in the distance (Figure 11). A photograph taken from Cropsey’s presumed vantage point (today part of a state correctional facility) verifies the accuracy of his transcriptions and reveals how little the area has changed in more than a century (Figure 12).

Sugar Loaf and Wickham Pond, Warwick, New York, now in the Smith College Museum of Art, is the earliest and most firmly documented of Cropsey’s paintings of the mountain (Figure 13).¹⁸ It was completed in 1867, two years after Cropsey had purchased the property near Warwick but two years before his summer home “Aladdin” was completed. Even here, in his first painting of the mountain, Cropsey greatly exaggerated its height and contour. This can be seen clearly when one looks at his later drawings and the photograph of the region (see Figures 9–12). The conical shape of Sugar Loaf in this painting, however, with its characteristic facing of two stony ridges, forms the basis for identifying the mountain in Cropsey’s subsequent compositions of the Warwick Valley, including the peak in the Museum’s painting. The wooden bridge supported by two posts that spans a stream in the foreground of the Smith College composition is a motif borrowed from Frederic E. Church’s *New England Scenery*.¹⁹ Despite Cropsey’s opinion that Church’s painting (Figure 14) was “greatly overrated,”²⁰ he continually borrowed elements from the younger artist’s work for his own landscape studies.²¹ Like Church’s popular piece, Smith College’s *Sugar Loaf* and other views that Cropsey painted of this mountain and its surroundings are

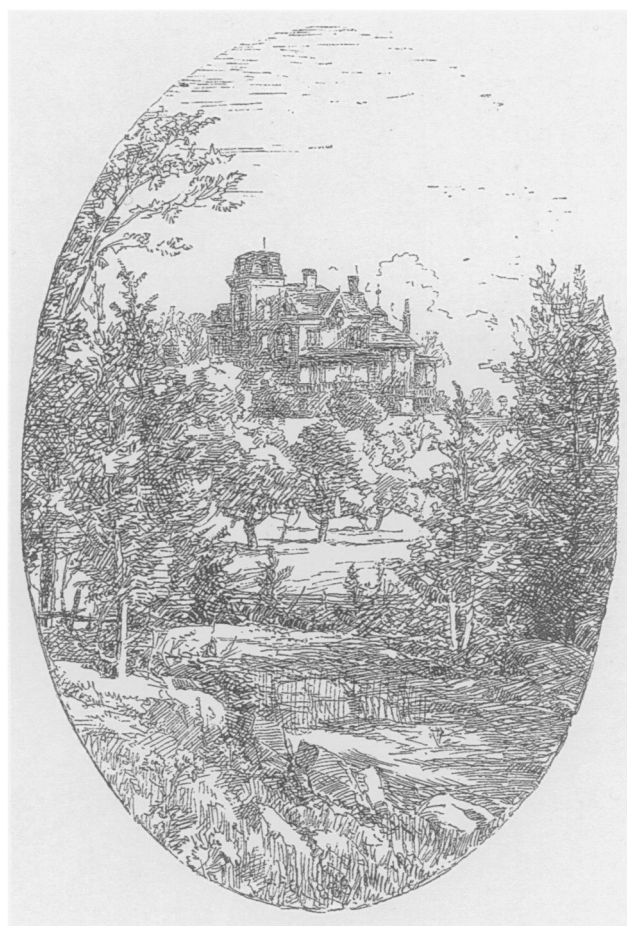


Figure 6. *Mr. Cropsey's House from the North Side*. Engraving. Published in William H. Forman, “Jasper Francis Cropsey, N.A.,” *Manhattan* 3 (April 1884), p. 379 (photo: Jerry L. Thompson)

often synthetic views, composed of discrete elements that reflect the immediate locale but are impossible to see from a single viewpoint.

Sugar Loaf is also seen in *Wickham Lake*, painted in 1876 (Figure 15).²² It is Cropsey’s only other painting of Sugar Loaf that has retained its correct title. For this composition the artist probably utilized his sketch done from Bellvale (Figure 9), but in the painting the mountain is amplified and the lake opens to the immediate foreground. The landscape surrounding the lake was largely fabricated by the artist and bears no resemblance to the site, which was more accurately depicted—except for the bridge—in the Smith College painting (Figure 13). The viewpoint is higher than the one in *Sugar Loaf and Wickham Pond*, and Schunnemunk Mountain, its unique contour an important component of the painting, now appears to the right of Sugar Loaf. A photograph of Schunnemunk’s ridge, taken from Bellvale Mountain and looking north toward Sugar Loaf (concealed by foliage), shows that Cropsey depicted the profile of this mountain precisely (Figure 16).²³ The inclusion of Sugar Loaf and Wickham Lake, exagger-

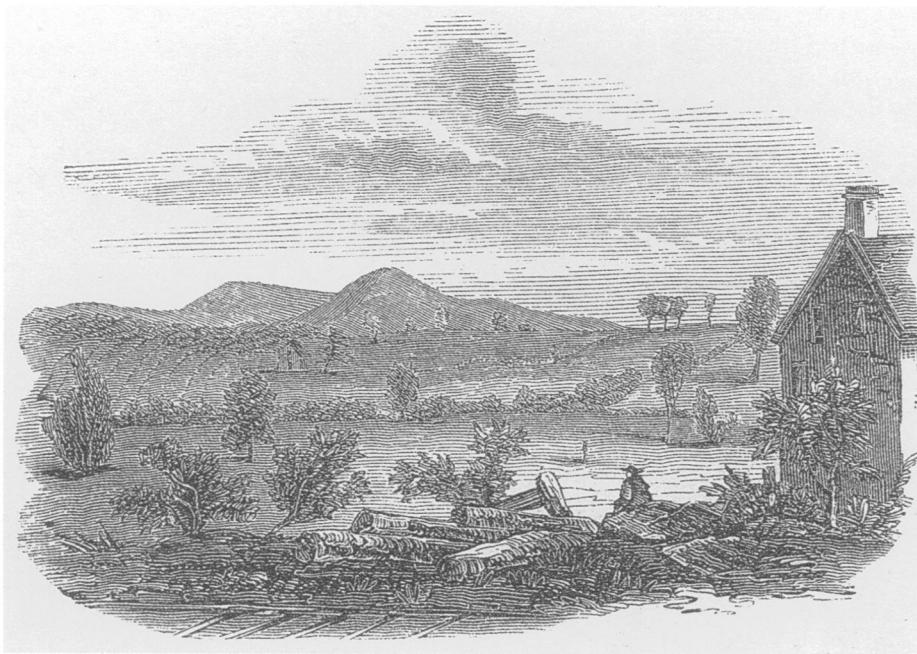


Figure 7. *Sugar Loaf Mountain from Chester*. Engraving by Lossing and Barritt after a sketch by William MacLeod. Published in *Harper's New York and Erie Rail-Road Guide Book* (New York, 1851), p. 45 (photo: General Research Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations)



Figure 8. *Sugar Loaf Mountain as Seen from Oxford*. Engraving by Lossing and Barritt after a sketch by William MacLeod, New York. Published in *Harper's New York and Erie Rail-Road Guide Book* (New York, 1851), p. 41 (photo: General Research Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations)

ated as they are, alongside Schunnemunk, accurately portrayed, confirms that Cropsey's painting depicts the topography of the Warwick Valley.²⁴

Sugar Loaf and Schunnemunk Mountain, as well as Wickham Lake, appear in an 1874 painting erroneously entitled *Adam and Eve Mountains* (Figure 17).²⁵ Mounts Adam and Eve, which the artist frequently painted, lie to the west of Sugar Loaf and Schunnemunk and have a similar shape,²⁶ a resemblance that has led to confusion in the titles of a number of Cropsey's paintings. An ear-

lier painting, dated 1872, of Mounts Adam and Eve viewed from "Aladdin," shows the wider, flatter shape of Eve as it rises in front of Adam, which appears lower in height (Figure 18). There is no lake in the vicinity of these two mountains, landmarks in the rich flatlands near the artist's home.

The Metropolitan Museum's *Autumn Landscape* (Figure 1) shows neither Wickham Lake nor Schunnemunk Mountain—features that would confirm its identification as Sugar Loaf—and its viewpoint cannot

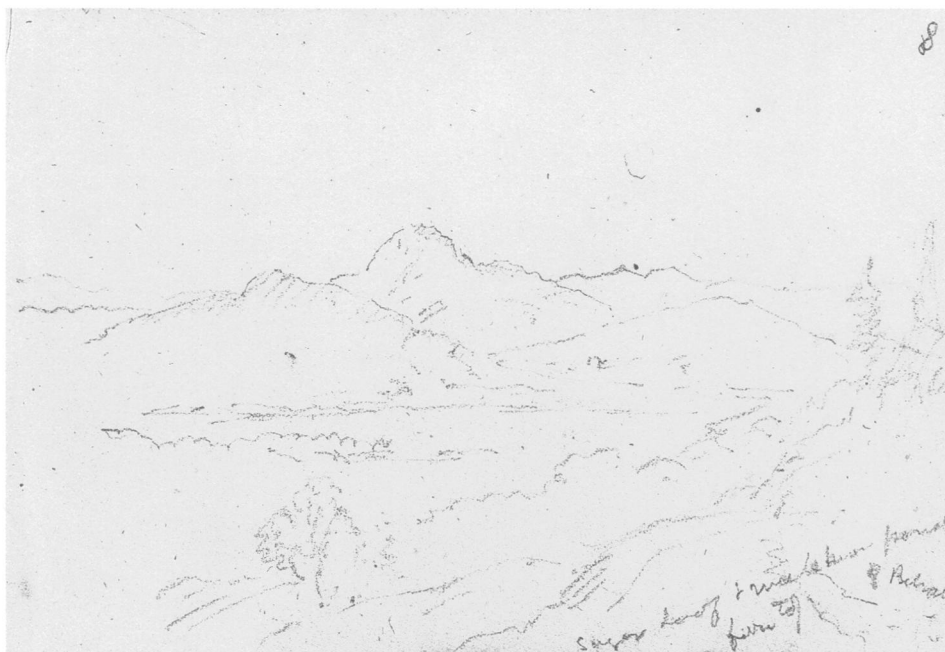


Figure 9. Cropsey. *Sugar Loaf & Wickham Pond from Top of Belvale* [sic], n.d. Drawing on paper from sketchbook SB-8, $3\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{4}$ in. (8.9 x 13.3 cm). The Newington-Cropsey Foundation, Hastings-on-Hudson, N.Y. (photo: Jerry L. Thompson)



Figure 10. Cropsey. *Landscape by Wickham Lake*, October 25, 1878. Pencil on gray paper, $9\frac{1}{2} \times 12$ in. (24.1 x 30.5 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Bequest of Maxim Karolik, 1972.843 (photo: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

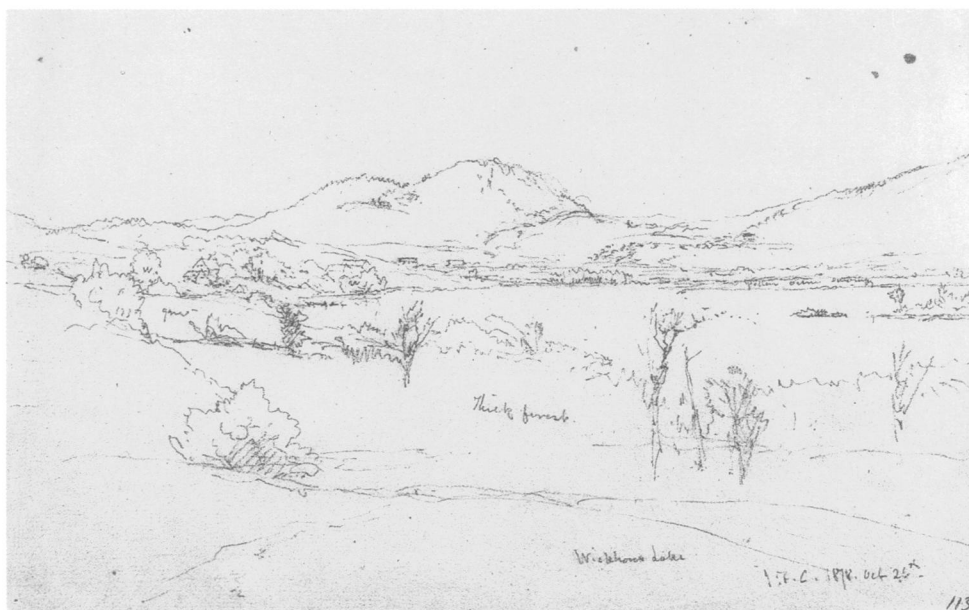


Figure 11. Cropsey.
Wickham Lake, October
26, 1878. Pencil on tan
paper, 7½ x 11⅞ in. (19.1
x 30.2 cm). The
Newington-Cropsey
Foundation, Hastings-on-
Hudson, N.Y. (photo:
John P. Vallancourt)

be precisely determined. Like the scene from Bellvale Mountain described by Forester, it contains many of the same pastoral elements: woods and water, meadows and pasturelands, small white villages. Cropsey's painting shares with Church's *New England Scenery* (Figure 14) a dominant mountain that serves as background for a pastoral scene: villages with white steeples in the middle distance; a prominent building to the left (in Church's composition, a mill; in Cropsey's, a white farmhouse); and, in the right foreground, trees that balance and frame the composition.

It would be difficult to identify the site of the

Museum's painting with certainty were it not for its correspondence to a privately owned, smaller picture of 1874 (Figure 19), now on long-term loan to the Georgia Museum of Art in Athens. Although this painting lacks documentation—it has been called *Mounts Adam and Eve* as well as *Sugar Loaf Mountain*—the characteristic shape of Schunnemunk Mountain confirms the identification of the site as Sugar Loaf. As the superimposed rectangle in Figure 20 reveals, the portion outlined in the Athens composition is essentially the same scene as that in the Museum's painting. The artist made the mountain the centerpiece of the Museum's painting and



Figure 12. View of Wickham Lake and Sugar Loaf Mountain. On the right is Snake Mountain and to the left are Brimstone Mountain and Mine Hill (photo: author)



Figure 13. Cropsey.
Sugar Loaf and Wickham Pond, Warwick, New York, 1867. Oil on canvas, 12 x 20 in. (30.5 x 50.8 cm).
Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Mass., Purchased with the Eleanor Lamont Cunningham, class of 1832, Fund, 1952.18 (photo: E. Irving Blomstrann)

focused more closely on the white house in the left foreground. The spatial relationships among the house, the steeples in the middle distance, and the mountain remain the same; only the contour of Sugar Loaf Mountain varies slightly. This close iconographic relationship between the two paintings suggests that the Museum's canvas was executed after the one in Athens; the trees added in the right foreground not only complete the composition but also obscure what would otherwise have been the identifying form of Schunnemunk.

The white house, surrounded by outbuildings and a white picket fence, is nearly identical in both paintings;

it is probably not just a picturesque ornament decorating the foreground of the composition. The structure bears a distinct resemblance to Maria Cooley Cropsey's family home, which her husband had painted as early as 1863, in a canvas nostalgically entitled *The Old Homestead of Isaac P. Cooley* (present location unknown), and again, shortly after Cropsey moved from the Warwick Valley to Hastings-on-Hudson, in canvases dated 1885 and 1886 (Figure 21). Although the Cooley homestead was situated on the southwest corner of Greenwood Lake, east across the Bearfort Mountains from "Aladdin," and could not actually



Figure 14. Frederic E. Church (1826–1900).
New England Scenery, 1851. Oil on canvas, 36 x 53 in. (91.4 x 134.6 cm).
George Walter Vincent Smith Art Museum, Springfield, Mass., George Walter Vincent Smith Collection 1.23.24 (photo: George Walter Vincent Smith Art Museum)



Figure 15. Cropsey.
Wickham Lake, 1876. Oil on
canvas, 23 x 40 in. (58.4 x
101.6 cm). Private collec-
tion, New York (photo:
courtesy Sotheby's, New
York)

have been seen within a landscape showing Sugar Loaf, the synthetic nature of these compositions, which followed the lead of Church, would have allowed the inclusion of such a personal element. Cropsey's sketchbook drawings at this time show that similar farmhouses were common around Warwick.

While the steeples in Cropsey's painting recall the white steeple found in Church's *New England Scenery*, they have a firm basis in the Warwick Valley landscape. The hamlet of Sugar Loaf, nearest to the mountain, had no such churches in the nineteenth century, but in the village of Warwick were the Old School Baptist Meeting House, built in 1810 (Figure 22), a red-brick Methodist Episcopal Church built in 1865, and a Calvary Baptist Church built in 1868. All three churches still stand today, although the steeple of the Methodist Episcopal Church (now Clocktower Center) has been destroyed by lightning.²⁷ The physi-

cal relationship among these churches corresponds exactly to the minute buildings in Cropsey's two paintings: the unmistakable appearance of the Old School Baptist Meeting House on the right and the Calvary Baptist Church on the left with their white steeples can be seen clearly, while less discernible between the two is the darker Methodist Episcopal Church.

That the town in these paintings is Warwick is further confirmed by the title of a landscape painted by David Johnson in 1874. Johnson had been Cropsey's pupil in 1850, and drawings and paintings of 1873 document that the two artists worked together during that year, sketching and painting side by side at Warwick.²⁸ Johnson's painting *Warwick, Orange County, New York* (Figure 23)—the artist inscribed the title on the reverse of the canvas—shows the distant peak of Sugar Loaf with the steeples of the town appearing in the valley below. Johnson's painting faithfully repli-

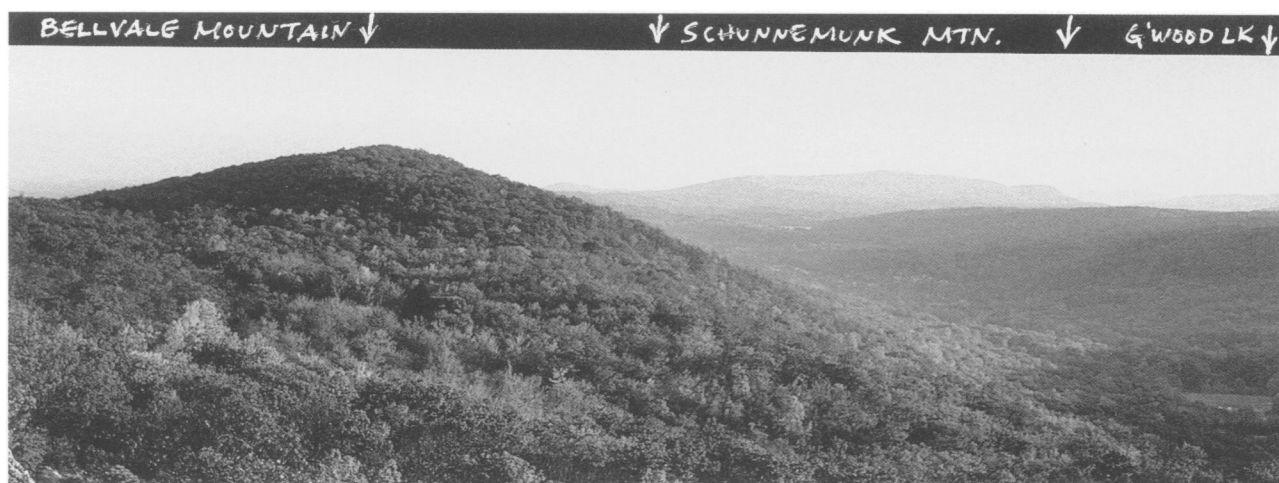


Figure 16. View of Bellvale and Schunnemunk Mountains looking north (photo: Nick Zungoli)

Figure 17. Cropsey. *Sugar Loaf Mountain* (previously titled *Adam and Eve Mountains*), 1874. Oil on canvas, 12 x 20 in. (30.5 x 50.8 cm). Private collection, New York, on long-term loan to the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Ithaca, N.Y. (photo: E. Irving Blomstrann)

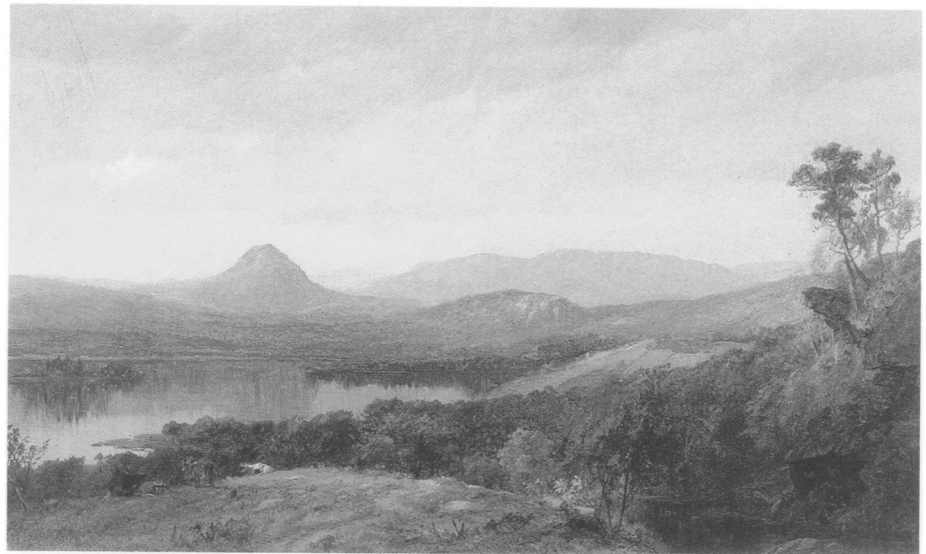
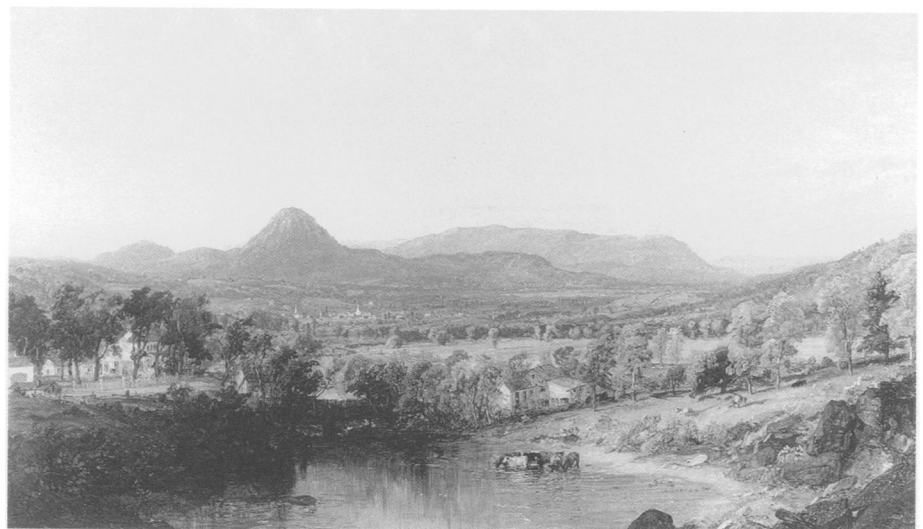


Figure 18. Cropsey. *Mounts Adam and Eve*, 1872. Oil on canvas, 12 1/8 x 20 1/8 in. (30.8 x 51.1 cm). Reynolda House, Museum of American Art, Winston-Salem, N.C., Gift of Barbara B. Millhouse (photo: Helga Photo Studio)



Figure 19. Cropsey. *Sugar Loaf Mountain*, 1874. Oil on canvas, 11 1/2 x 19 3/4 in. (29.2 x 50.2 cm). Collection of Mrs. John C. Newington, on long-term loan to the Georgia Museum of Art, Athens, Georgia (photo: courtesy The Newington-Cropsey Foundation)



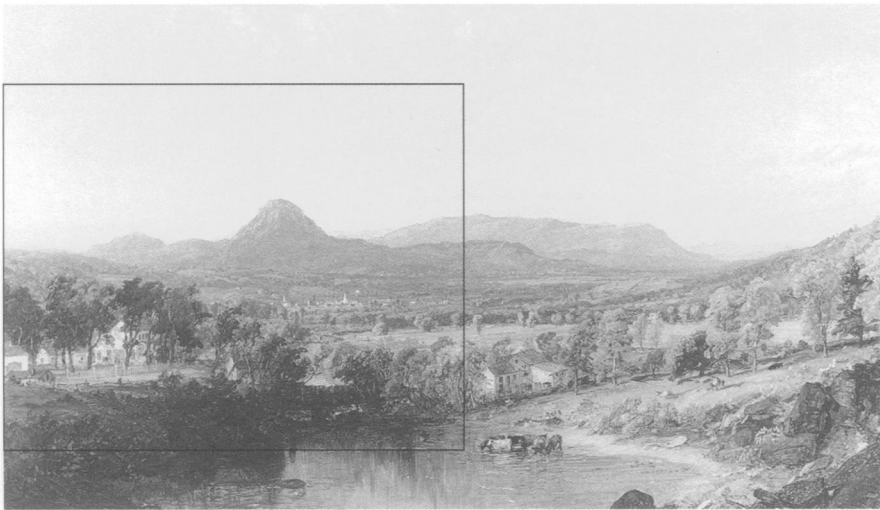


Figure 20. Figure 19 with superimposed outline of a composition similar to the Metropolitan Museum's *Autumn Landscape* (Figure 1)

cates the panoramic scale of the mountains, including Sugar Loaf, as seen from the site of Cropsey's home. In this composition, which omits Wickham Lake, the viewer looks sharply downward upon the foreground landscape, as if from one of the dormer windows in the upper stories of "Aladdin" (Figure 6).

The following year, 1875, Cropsey painted the same mountain range in a composition that goes farther to the east (Figure 24). His painting shows Sugar Loaf and Schunnemunk with Wickham Lake in the right middle distance, while to the left the village of Warwick is bathed in a luminous light. The Old School Baptist Meeting House is clearly visible, while the darker steeple of the Methodist Episcopal Church is shrouded in the heavy morning mist that hangs in the valley during late summer and early fall.²⁹ Cropsey's painting, like Johnson's, was done from a high vantage point: again, the viewer looks sharply downward, this time upon carefully but awkwardly rendered buildings in the fore-

ground.³⁰ Though it would be tempting to see these structures as a portion of the artist's estate, extant photographs of the grounds that were taken after Cropsey sold his home do not verify such a hypothesis.³¹

Another painting can be added with some assurance to Cropsey's images of Sugar Loaf Mountain. Presently entitled *Mount Chocorua and Railroad Train, New Hampshire* (Figure 25), the 1869 painting resembles Gifford's composition of Mount Chocorua (Figure 2), but the shape of the mountain with its two distinctive stony ridges corresponds closely with the peak in the Museum's painting.³² The train itself offers the strongest evidence for determining the proper subject: whereas no rail line ran near Mount Chocorua, the Warwick Valley Railroad (which later became the Lehigh and Hudson River Railroad) was organized in 1859 and ran directly past Sugar Loaf Mountain on its eleven-mile line from Warwick to Greycourt near Chester, where it connected with the Erie Railroad.³³



Figure 21. Cropsey. *Cooley Homestead, Greenwood Lake*, 1886. Oil on canvas, 19½ x 35½ in. (49.5 x 90.2 cm). Collection of Mrs. John C. Newington (photo: courtesy The Newington-Cropsey Foundation)

A local resident fondly remembered “the little steam engine that hauled the passenger train out of Warwick Station every morning at seven, how it tooted for the crossings and discharged great volumes of smoke as it chugged its way to Greycourt.”³⁴

Cropsey frequently included the railroad in his compositions, but in this painting it has more personal significance. At this time he was acquainted with the Sanford family—George W. and his son Ezra were closely connected with the Warwick Valley Railroad—as well as with Jay Gould, whose Erie Railroad supplied the locomotives and crews for the upstart line.³⁵ In the same year that Cropsey painted *Sugar Loaf with the train* (Figure 25), Gould, who had taken over the Erie the year before, commissioned him to decorate what was probably the first locomotive ever manufactured by the newly formed Brooks Locomotive Works. Considered the finest ever made—its boiler received fourteen coats of varnish—the powerful locomotive was adorned by Cropsey with bright red rosebuds on every spot in which they could be placed. The locomotive, named the “George G. Bernard,” was a favorite of Gould’s, who often rode in its cab.³⁶ As Donald Melville Barrell described the spectacle, the train attracted much attention rolling through the countryside “with Gould aboard blowing its whistle from among the rosebuds.”³⁷

It is possible that Cropsey returned to *Sugar Loaf* as a subject after he moved to Hastings-on-Hudson, New York, in 1885. A watercolor from 1890, *Winter Landscape, Dusk*, shows a mountain in the distance that appears to be Sugar Loaf (Figure 26).³⁸ The subject certainly does not resemble any site near his home in Westchester County. In this watercolor, considered one of his most appealing, Cropsey further romanticized the mountain by placing it above snow-covered terrain.³⁹

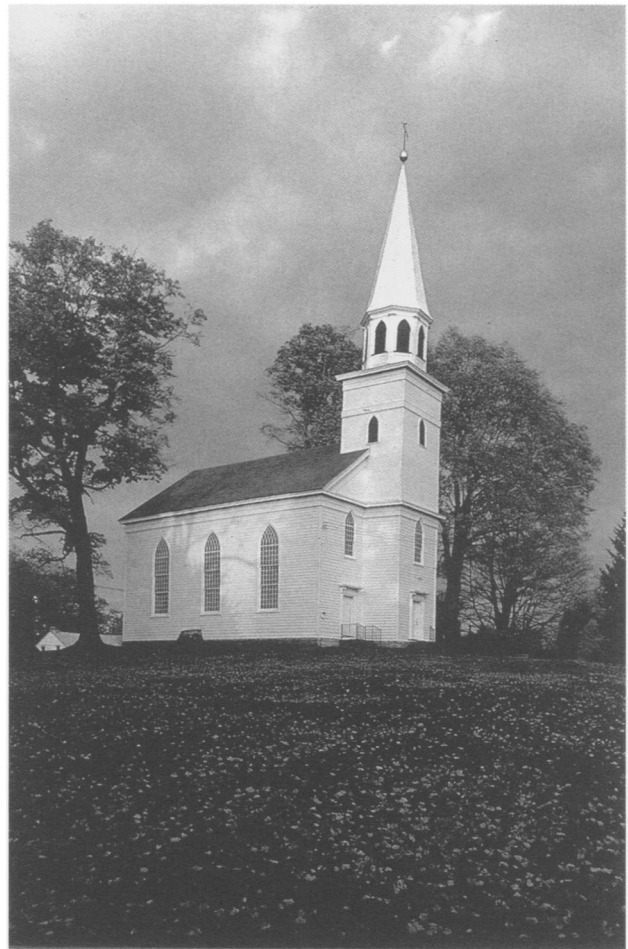


Figure 22. Old School Baptist Meeting House, Warwick, N.Y. (photo: © John Lewis Stage)

Figure 23. David Johnson (1827–1908). *Warwick, Orange County, New York*, 1874. Oil on canvas, 12 x 20¹/₈ in. (30.5 x 51.1 cm). Collection of Dick Button, New York (photo: courtesy Christie’s Images Ltd., 1999)





Figure 24. Cropsey. *Landscape*, 1875. Oil on canvas, 14 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 24 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (35.6 x 61.3 cm). Montclair Art Museum, Montclair, N.J., Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Golt, 1961, 61.3 (photo: Montclair Art Museum)



Figure 25. Cropsey. *Sugar Loaf Mountain and Railroad Train* (previously titled *Mount Chocorua and Railroad Train, New Hampshire*), 1869. Oil on canvas, 20 x 33 in. (50.8 x 83.8 cm). The Diplomatic Reception Rooms, U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C., Gift of Mr. and Mrs. David S. Ingalls, 1978, 78.79 (photo: Helga Photo Studio)

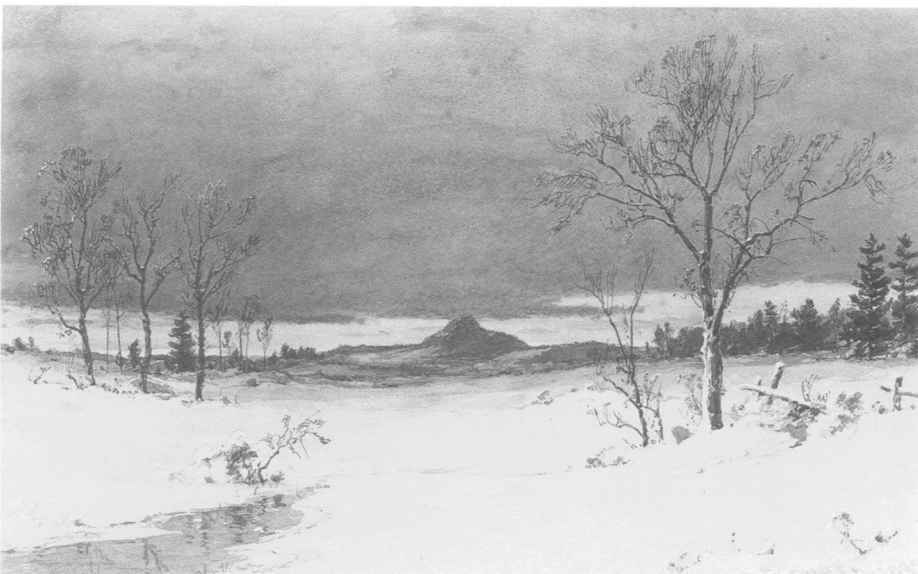


Figure 26. Cropsey. *Winter Landscape, Dusk*, 1890. Watercolor on paper, 11 x 18 in. (27.9 x 45.7 cm). The Newington-Cropsey Foundation, Hastings-on-Hudson, N.Y. (photo: Taylor & Dull Inc.)

In his paintings of Sugar Loaf, Cropsey transformed a mountain of fairly modest proportions and shape into a monumental form, which, like Mount Chocorua, majestically rises above the surrounding terrain. It is a profound transformation—one that does not occur to this degree in any of the painter's other works—from the physical realities of the landscape to the mental creation of the artist. One may well ask, as with Cézanne's views of Mont Sainte-Victoire, what personal meaning the peak might have had for the artist. Although it is not mentioned in any of Cropsey's extant writings, this was a motif to which he was repeatedly drawn.⁴⁰ Ironically, because of the liberties Cropsey took in his portrayals of the mountain, Sugar Loaf has gone unrecognized—until now—as the subject of numerous paintings.⁴¹

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to the many people living in the Warwick and Sugar Loaf region who have aided my research, especially Robert Fletcher, Richard W. Hull, Mr. and Mrs. Greg Masefield, John Lewis Stage, Mr. and Mrs. John Woloszczak, and Nick Zungoli.

NOTES

1. *Sugar Loaf and Wickham Pond, Warwick, N.Y.*, no. 82, Artists' Fund Society, New York, 1867 (see note 18 below); *Sugar Loaf Mountain, Orange County, N.Y.*, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, 1882; *The Sugar Loaf Mountain, Orange Co.*, 14 x 26 in., Ortgies & Co., New York, 1887, lot 61. See James L. Yarnall and William H. Gerdtz, *The National Museum of American Art's Index to American Art Exhibition Catalogues from the Beginning through the 1876 Centennial Year* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1986), vol. 1, p. 889, no. 21572; William S. Talbot, *Jasper F. Cropsey, 1823–1900* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1977), pp. 300, 539. Paintings entitled *Wickham Lake* often did not show Sugar Loaf Mountain.
2. Sparks had acquired the painting from John Lenz. John Graham & Sons, New York, advertised the painting in *Antiques* 67 (September 1955), p. 193, shortly after it was exhibited at the Currier Gallery of Art, Manchester, N.H., and it was from this dealer that the Metropolitan Museum acquired the painting.
3. William S. Talbot, *Jasper F. Cropsey, 1823–1900*, exh. cat. (Washington, D.C.: National Collection of Fine Arts, 1970), p. 99.
4. Natalie Spassky et al., *American Paintings in The Metropolitan Museum of Art: Volume II. A Catalogue of Works by Artists Born between 1816 and 1845* (New York: MMA, 1985), pp. 193–94.
5. Donald D. Keyes, curator of the 1980 exhibition "The White Mountains: Place and Perceptions," in a letter to the author, June 5, 1996, states that the painting showing both a valley and a town cannot be a representation of Mount Chocorua.
6. Cropsey exhibited *Winter, Chocorua Peak, White Mountains*, no. 456, at the National Academy of Design, New York, in 1857 as part of a small set of "The Four Seasons," and in 1873 he displayed *Chicorua* [sic] in *Autumn*, no. 11, at the Century Association, New York. See Yarnall and Gerdtz, *Index to American Art Exhibition Catalogues*, p. 884, no. 21418.
7. The largest painting of Mount Chocorua is a canvas that is dated 1873 and measures 20 x 35¼ in.; listed in Talbot, *Cropsey* (1977), p. 449. A number of smaller studies are known, and when Cropsey returned to the United States in 1863, three small paintings of Chocorua were offered at the London auction of his works. Though documented as Mount Jefferson, the mountains depicted in two major canvases Cropsey painted in England—*Indian Summer Morning in the White Mountains*, 1857 (Currier Gallery of Art, Manchester), and *Mount Jefferson, Pinkham Notch, White Mountains*, 1857 (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond)—bear a striking resemblance to Mount Chocorua. This melding of images also characterizes Cropsey's Sugar Loaf paintings, in which the modest mountain often assumes the more imposing massiveness of a White Mountain peak.
8. Russel Headley, *The History of Orange County, New York* (Middletown, N.Y.: Van Deusen and Elms, 1908), p. 432. Talbot (*Cropsey* [1977], p. 223) claims that Cropsey purchased about 45 acres of land. According to John Woloszczak, the present owner of the property on which Cropsey's house stood, the artist's holdings were closer to 165 or 170 acres and extended on both sides of the road.
9. "Art-Home in the Hills," October 18, 1871, clipping, artist's papers, The Newington-Cropsey Foundation, Hastings-on-Hudson, N.Y. See also Talbot, *Cropsey* (1977), pp. 223–25.
10. William H. Forman, "Jasper Francis Cropsey, N.A.," *Manhattan* 3 (April 1884), p. 379.
11. Frank Forester [Henry William Herbert], cited in Headley, *History of Orange County*, p. 433.
12. Although Talbot (*Cropsey* [1977], p. 227) writes that Cropsey traveled to Lake George, Newport, and Maine during this period, I have found no drawing or letter to support this. Cropsey frequently traveled during this time by rail to the Ramapo Valley from his home; in 1873 he went as far as Sidney Plains near Binghamton, N.Y.; and in 1880 he participated in the Artists' Excursion, organized by Edward Gay for the Artists' Fund Society, which journeyed to Niagara Falls. No other extensive trips can be documented. Since Cropsey often used earlier drawings for his paintings, titles of dated works are of little value in determining his travels.
13. Donald Melville Barrell, *Along the Wawayanda Path: From Old Greycourt to Chester to Sugar Loaf* (Middletown, N.Y.: T. Emmett Henderson, 1975), p. 130.
14. Samuel W. Eager, *An Outline History of Orange County* (Newburgh, N.Y.: S. T. Callahan, 1846–47), p. 517.
15. Cited in Headley, *History of Orange County*, p. 162.
16. Artist's journal, September 6, 1845, microfilm and typescript, Newington-Cropsey Foundation.
17. Frank Forester [Henry William Herbert], *The Warwick Woodlands; or, Things as They Were There Twenty Years Ago* (Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson, 1850), p. 15. The viewpoint would have been from the present Mount Peter on Kane Road off Route 17A leading down to Warwick. This accessible outlook is also the site where Cropsey sketched Sugar Loaf.
18. The canvas is probably the painting offered for auction at the Artists' Fund Society, New York, in 1867, as no. 82, *Sugar Loaf*

- and *Wickham Pond*, Warwick, N.Y. The same title is partially indicated on a torn label on the back of the painting which reads "Sugar Loaf, Wickham Pond, War . . ." from Macbeth Galleries. I am grateful to Michael Goodison, program coordinator and archivist, Smith College Museum of Art, for this information.
19. Cropsey must also have known Church's 1850 study for *New England Scenery*. Its foreground wooden bridge, unlike the more substantial structure in Church's finished painting, was used by Cropsey in more than thirty of his paintings of the Warwick Woodlands or the Ramapo Valley. See painting files, Newington-Cropsey Foundation. Talbot (*Cropsey* [1977], p. 245) labels the motif "the *capriccio* of the spindly bridge."
 20. Cropsey, jealous over the high sum *New England Scenery* commanded at the American Art-Union sale, complained in a letter to his wife (December 15–17, 1852, Newington-Cropsey Foundation) that the picture is "greatly overrated—but it possesses all those qualities which suit the public."
 21. For the influence of Church's painting, see Talbot, *Cropsey* (1977), pp. 129, 397; my catalogue entry, "Greenwood Lake," in Barbara Novak, *The Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection: Nineteenth-Century American Painting* (New York: Vendome Press, 1986), pp. 78–81; and Franklin Kelly, "New England Scenery," catalogue entry in Franklin Kelly and Gerald L. Carr, *The Early Landscapes of Frederic Edwin Church, 1845–1854* (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1987), p. 119.
 22. The painting was purchased by Frank Holbert in New York, ca. 1910–15, and was given by his daughter to the Albert Wisner Memorial Library. The library sold the painting ca. 1980; it then passed through the New York art market and was bought by a private collector in New York in 1995.
 23. I am grateful to Nick Zungoli (Sugar Loaf, N.Y.), who deserves all credit for identifying Schunnemunk Mountain in Cropsey's compositions.
 24. The painting *Upper Hudson*, 1876 (Fruitlands Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge; published in Clara Endicott Sears, *Highlights among the Hudson River Artists* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1947], pl. 49), also depicts Sugar Loaf rising above Wickham Lake.
 25. The exhibition catalogue entry for the painting in Frederick Baekeland's *Images of America: The Painter's Eye, 1833–1925* (Birmingham: Birmingham Museum of Art, 1991), p. 42 n. 4, lists together Cropsey's paintings of Mounts Adam and Eve and Wickham Lake as though they depict the same site.
 26. Other paintings by Cropsey of Mounts Adam and Eve are *Mount Adam and Eve, Vernon Valley, N.J.*, by 1865 (unlocated; exhibited, Artists' Fund Society, New York, 1865); *Mounts Adam and Eve, Warwick, N.Y.*, 1869 (private collection); *Peaceful Valley*, 1870 (Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Conn.); *Mounts Adam and Eve, Warwick, N.Y.*, 1872 (private collection); *Mounts Adam and Eve—Haymaking*, 1883 (Berry-Hill Galleries Inc., New York); *Mounts Adam and Eve, Warwick, N.Y.*, 1884 (unlocated; formerly Davis and Long, New York, and Meredith Long and Company, Houston, Tex.); *Mounts Adam and Eve, Winter*, 1885 (private collection); and *Mounts Adam and Eve, Orange County, N.Y.*, 1891 (private collection).
 27. Richard W. Hull, letter to the author, December 16, 1996; idem, *History of Warwick, New York* (New York: privately printed, 1996), pp. 69–72.
 28. In 1873 Cropsey and Johnson made virtually identical drawings of Greenwood Lake (Wadsworth Atheneum; David Nisinson, New York) and identical paintings of the old bridge on the Wawayanda at Warwick (formerly Berry-Hill Galleries; unlocated). Johnson's painting *Brook Study at Warwick* (Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica, N.Y.) was done from the same spot as Cropsey's oil sketch *Wooded Landscape* (Newington-Cropsey Foundation). Other works painted by Johnson during his stay with Cropsey at "Aladdin" include *Study near Warwick, N.Y.*, 1873 (private collection), which shows Mounts Adam and Eve in the distance, and *Near Warwick, N.Y.*, ca. 1873 (Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.). Many studies of the Warwick Valley and the nearby Ramapo Valley were made at this time. See Gwendolyn Owens, *Nature Transcribed: The Landscapes and Still Lifes of David Johnson (1827–1908)*, exh. cat. (Ithaca: Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, 1988), pp. 49, 52, 69–84.
 29. I am grateful to Richard W. Hull for the information regarding the morning mists.
 30. Because Cropsey's Warwick home burned in a spectacular fire (1909), an exact viewpoint cannot be determined.
 31. I am deeply indebted to Agnes and John Woloszczak for escorting me around their property, where the ruined foundation of "Aladdin" still remains. The photographs, from a real estate brochure, are published in Talbot, *Cropsey* (1977), fig. 193.
 32. Although the painting was included in his 1980 exhibition "The White Mountains: Place and Perceptions," Keyes now thinks that the mountain lacks the rugged features of Mount Chocorua (letter to the author, June 5, 1996).
 33. Hull, *History of Warwick*, pp. 132–33; Headley, *History of Orange County*, p. 450. A contemporary drawing from the dustcover of Barrell's *Along the Wawayanda Path* shows the railroad passing by Sugar Loaf.
 34. George W. Hansen, *Trail Sketches from Honey Ranch* (Goshen, N.Y.: The Bookmill, 1963), p. 114.
 35. Cropsey painted in watercolor *Sanford's Farm*, 1872 (Newington-Cropsey Foundation), and *Sanford's Millpond*, 1874 (private collection). Cropsey's well-known painting *The Old Mill*, 1876 (Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Va.), depicts Sanford's tannery. Cropsey gave a signed and inscribed engraving of the painting to Mrs. Sanford (collection of Mrs. Greg Masefield). In 1880, when a storm blew down one of the trees that Cropsey had painted in *The Old Mill*, Sanford wrote to the artist asking him if he wished to sketch it. Cropsey accepted the invitation (letter, J. F. Cropsey to Maria Cooley Cropsey, November 9, 1880 [Newington-Cropsey Foundation]). A letter from Gould to the artist, dated June 26, 1869 (Newington-Cropsey Foundation), documents the entrepreneur's cordial relationship with Cropsey and his wife. For the relationship between the Erie and the Warwick Valley Railroad, see Hull, *History of Warwick*, pp. 132–33.
 36. Edward Harold Mott, *Between the Ocean and the Lakes: The Story of Erie* (New York: J. S. Collins, 1899), p. 395; Barrell, *Along the Wawayanda Path*, pp. 115–16. While Barrell believed that Gould commissioned Cropsey in the 1880s, Mott documented the date as 1869.
 37. Barrell, *Along the Wawayanda Path*, p. 116.
 38. Despite lack of documentation, the title *Sugar Loaf Mountain* has been given to the watercolor. See Newington-Cropsey Art Database, 1989, Newington-Cropsey Foundation.
 39. Talbot, *Cropsey* (1970), pp. 106–7; idem, *Cropsey* (1977), p. 241.
 40. Unfortunately, there are few extant letters and no journals that document the artist's life when he lived in the Warwick Valley or in Hastings-on-Hudson.
 41. Other paintings that may show Sugar Loaf are *Autumn at Mount Chocorua*, 1869 (Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York); *Mounts Adam and Eve*, 1872 (Art Museum, Princeton University, Princeton, N.J.); and *Boaters on a Mountain Lake at Sunset*, 1874 (unlocated; Sotheby's, New York, sale cat., May 30, 1985, lot 20).