

# Weehawken from Turtle Grove: A Forgotten “Knickerbocker” Watercolor by William J. Bennett

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**A**N IMPORTANT EARLY American watercolor in the Metropolitan Museum’s collection, *View on the Hudson River*, long attributed to William Guy Wall (1792–after 1863), can now be ascribed instead to Wall’s contemporary William J. Bennett (ca. 1784–1844). The picture may also be given back its original title, *Weehawken from Turtle Grove* (Figure 1) and even dated with fair precision to about 1830. In addition, we now know that the watercolor is the source of an engraving (Figure 2) included in one of the earliest New York City publications of American scenery. The picture’s subject, the Weehawken bluffs on the New Jersey shore of the Hudson, was a recreational destination favored by New Yorkers of the day, as well as the setting of a “legend” penned by a leading Knickerbocker writer.

The picture represents the view north, upriver, from a peninsula on the western, or New Jersey, shore of the Hudson River. The view across the water—a bay created by the peninsula—shows Hoboken at the extreme left and Weehawken in the center. The time of day is late afternoon. Several large boulders and two conifers that appear to be cedars dominate the foreground and serve as a border to a path partly visible in the lower left corner. At left the bay is only partially seen beyond the trees and boulders, which set off the distant rocky bluffs of Weehawken. In the middle distance at right, fishing boats and sloops plot the Hudson River’s recession to the north, with the sails of the sloops serving to close off the composition.

*Weehawken from Turtle Grove* entered the Metropolitan Museum’s collection in 1954 as part of the large bequest of prints, maps, drawings, and documents pertaining to New York City assembled by Edward W. C. Arnold.<sup>1</sup> Since then the watercolor has been regularly exhibited and reproduced.<sup>2</sup> The picture’s earlier attribution to Wall was understandable. Wall, an émigré from Ireland, executed the watercolors for *The Hudson River Portfolio*, a series of twenty hand-colored

aquatint engravings incised chiefly by John Hill and published in New York by Henry J. Megarey from 1821 to 1825. Additionally, Wall made several handsome watercolor views of New York City, also in the Arnold bequest, two of which (see Figure 3) were engraved by Hill and published by Megarey as a set in 1823.<sup>3</sup> *Weehawken from Turtle Grove*, which is unsigned, is essentially consistent in both subject and style with the Wall watercolors in the Metropolitan’s collection, but it is superior to any of them. It possesses a strength of composition, a delicacy of atmosphere, and a painstaking articulation of foreground details that the more schematic works by Wall do not equal. Its special quality seems to have been acknowledged by past commentators. Former Metropolitan curator Albert Ten Eyck Gardner singled out this “Wall,” from among others in the collection, for reproduction in his *History of Watercolor Painting in America*, published in 1966, as did Stuart Feld in an article previewing the Metropolitan Museum’s 1966 exhibition “Two Hundred Years of Watercolor Painting in America.” John K. Howat also illustrated *View on the Hudson River* (along with several authentic Walls) in his 1972 book, *The Hudson River and Its Painters*. Howat remarked on the picture’s “greater breadth and luminosity” as compared with other works by Wall.<sup>4</sup>

That the picture lacked its proper title and was so long attributed to Wall testifies to several other factors besides its resemblance to Wall’s work. For one thing, the setting is now so altered by urban buildup as to defy identification with Bennett’s representation. More to the point, there are relatively few known Bennett watercolors of natural settings with which to compare *Weehawken*.

This is not because the artist produced little work or because his contemporaries ignored it. Bennett had been exhibiting since he was a teenager in his native London, where he had studied watercolor and aquatint engraving at the Royal Academy under Richard Westall. By 1810 his work was earning accolades in the London press, praise that followed him to New York in 1826, where he continued to exhibit his watercolors

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METROPOLITAN MUSEUM JOURNAL 36

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regularly and was quickly elected to membership in the fledgling National Academy of Design. But in both England and America, Bennett's main livelihood came from producing aquatints after his own and other artists' drawings at a time of rapidly increasing demand for topographical and picturesque views of Europe and the eastern United States.<sup>5</sup> Due to the quality and wide dissemination of copies of his prints, Bennett's reputation as an engraver has persisted and blossomed at the expense of his original watercolors. Most of those were produced as models for his engravings, and probably for that reason few were signed. Undoubtedly, many original Bennett watercolors have not survived, but as had been the case with *Weehawken*, others may remain unrecognized as his work.

Moreover, the majority of Bennett's prints—and consequently the majority of his known watercolors—are of cities. The only other drawing in the Metropolitan's collection that can safely be attributed to him is

*View of South Street, from Maiden Lane, New York City* (Figure 4). That picture was executed as the model for one of three aquatints Bennett made for Megarey's *Street Views of the City of New-York*, a projected series of prints of which only the first number was issued, in 1834.<sup>6</sup> *View of South Street* shows few features (except the sky and clouds) readily comparable with the natural forms that prevail in *Weehawken from Turtle Grove*. However, the latter compares well with Bennett watercolors in the collections of the New-York Historical Society and the Brooklyn Museum of Art. The refined rendering of water, sky, sailing vessels, and figures in *Weehawken* strongly resembles corresponding features in *View of the Bay of New York from the Battery, N.Y.C.* (Figure 5), while its treatment of foliage in the foreground and on the background hills closely matches that of comparable motifs in *View on the Potomac, Looking toward Harper's Ferry* (Figure 6); both date probably later than the Metropolitan picture.<sup>7</sup>



Figure 1. William J. Bennett (ca. 1784–1844). *Weehawken from Turtle Grove*, ca. 1830. Watercolor, gouache, and graphite on off-white wove paper, 15 $\frac{1}{16}$  x 20 $\frac{1}{16}$  in. (38.6 x 51 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Edward W. C. Arnold Collection of New York Prints, Maps, and Pictures, Bequest of Edward W. C. Arnold, 1954 (54.90.107). See also Colorplate 4

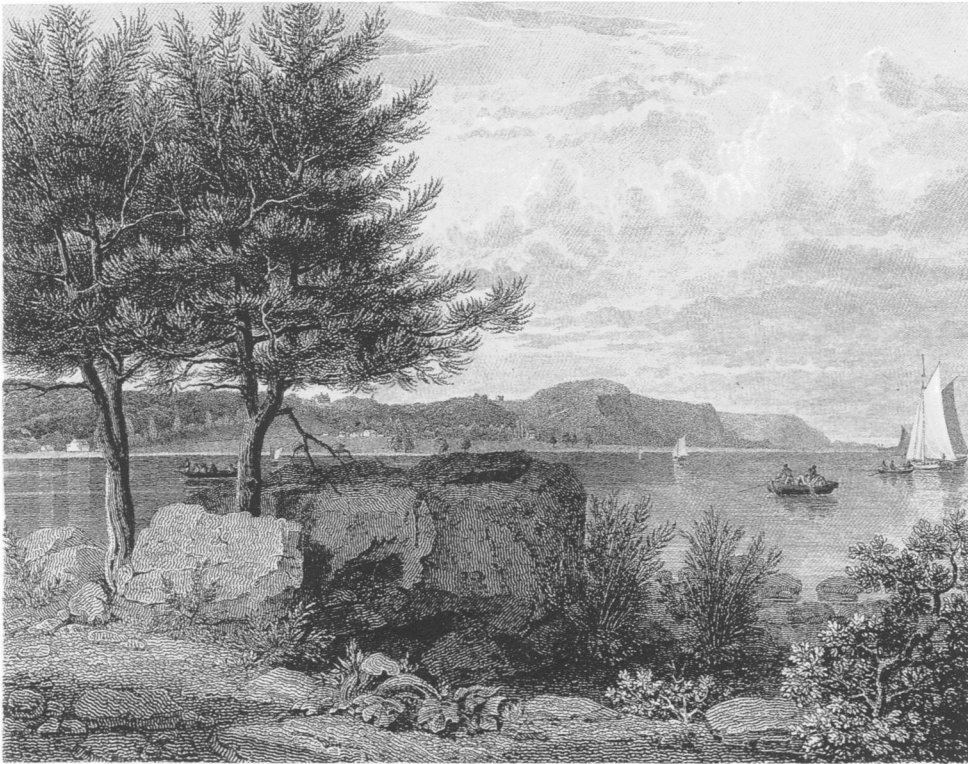


Figure 2. Asher B. Durand (1796–1886), after William J. Bennett. *Weehawken*. Steel engraving, 4½ x 6 in. (11.5 x 15.2 cm), published in *The American Landscape* (New York: Elam Bliss, 1830), pl. [1]. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. Frederick F. Durand, 1930 (30.15.59)



Figure 3. William Guy Wall (1792–after 1863). *New York from Weehawken*, ca. 1823. Watercolor, gouache, and graphite on off-white wove paper, 16⅞ x 25⅝ in. (40.8 x 62.8 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Edward W. C. Arnold Collection of New York Prints, Maps, and Pictures, Bequest of Edward W. C. Arnold, 1954 (54.90.109).



Figure 4. William J. Bennett. *View of South Street, from Maiden Lane, New York City*. Watercolor used with brush and pen on off-white wove paper, 9  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 13  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. (24.4 x 34.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Edward W. C. Arnold Collection of New York Prints, Maps, and Pictures, Bequest of Edward W. C. Arnold, 1954 (54.90.130)

Figure 5. William J. Bennett. *View of the Bay of New York from the Battery, N.Y.C., ca. 1844*. Watercolor on paper, 11  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 17  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. (29.2 x 44.1 cm). The New-York Historical Society, Abbott-Lenox Fund, 1962, 1962.23 (photo: The New-York Historical Society)



The key to the identity of the site depicted in the work formerly known as *View on the Hudson River* is the already mentioned engraving entitled *Weehawken* (Figure 2), the first of the six plates included in *The American Landscape* (1830), a publication project of the engraver Asher B. Durand and the printer E. Wade. Durand (with minor assistance from James Smillie) executed steel engravings from original paintings and watercolors by himself, Bennett, Thomas

Cole, and Robert Walter Weir.<sup>8</sup> William Cullen Bryant wrote the bulk of the text (see Appendix 1) accompanying the plates, and the whole was published by Elam Bliss. The engraving was republished in the *New-York Mirror* on April 20, 1833, with an accompanying description (Appendix 2).<sup>9</sup>

Inscribed "Painted by W. J. Bennett" and "Engraved by Asher B. Durand," *Weehawken* derives in virtually every particular from the Metropolitan watercolor



Figure 6. William J. Bennett.  
*View on the Potomac, Looking  
 toward Harper's Ferry*, ca. 1834.  
 Watercolor over graphite on  
 beige wove paper, 16 x 22½ in.  
 (40.6 x 57.2 cm). Brooklyn  
 Museum of Art, Dick S. Ramsay  
 Fund, 46.196 (photo: Brooklyn  
 Museum of Art)



formerly attributed to Wall. Its identification with *Weehawken from Turtle Grove* is confirmed by a description of a picture of that title that Bennett exhibited at the National Academy of Design in 1831: "Painted for a work published by Durand & Wade," an obvious reference to *The American Landscape*.<sup>10</sup> (Bryant, in his text for the plate, also identified Turtle Grove as the vantage point.)<sup>11</sup> In the same exhibition, Bennett exhibited *The Falls of the Sawkill, near Milford, Pike County, Pa.* (unlocated), which bore an identical description and was also reproduced in *The American Landscape* (Figure 7) and in the *Mirror*, on May 25, 1833.<sup>12</sup>

In their "Prospectus of *The American Landscape*," Durand and Wade proposed to publish ten numbers of six prints each, to be issued semiannually.<sup>13</sup> Unlike Wall and Hill, who, in *The Hudson River Portfolio*, had concentrated their talents on the scenery bordering a single watercourse, the collaborators on the later project had more national, nationalistic, literary, and, it might be ventured, pious ambitions. In his preface, Bryant asserted that the features of American scenery were "not less strongly marked than those of the old continent," with its "tamings and softenings of cultivation" and its smaller variety of trees.<sup>14</sup> America's "far-spread wildness," said Bryant, better suggested, especially to visiting Europeans, the idea of divine creation:

Foreigners who have visited our country, particularly the mountainous parts, have spoken of a far-spread wildness, a look as if the new world was fresher from the hand of him who made it, the rocks and the very

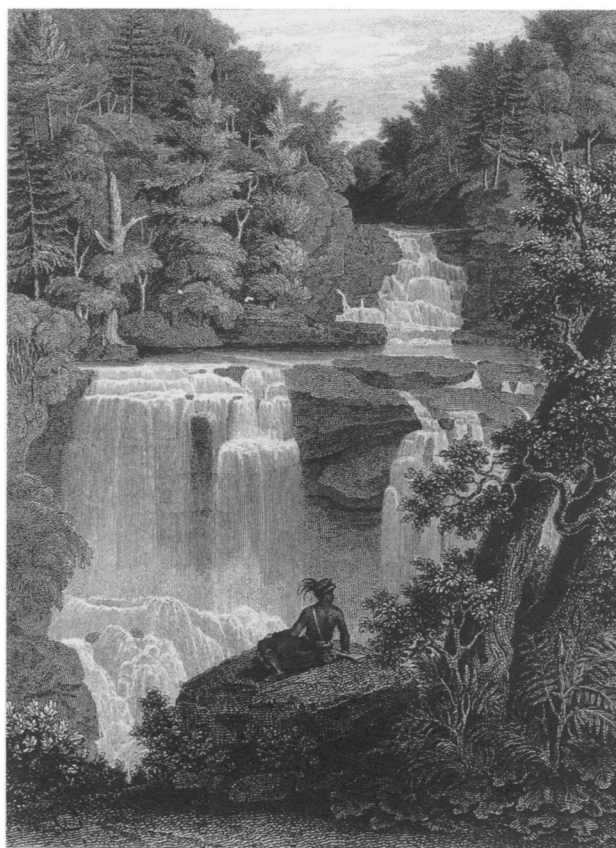


Figure 7. Asher B. Durand, after William J. Bennett. *The Falls of the Sawkill*. Steel engraving, 6½ x 4¾ in. (15.4 x 11.2 cm), published in *The American Landscape*, pl. [5]. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. Frederick F. Durand, 1930 (30.15.59)

hillocks wearing the shape in which he fashioned them, the waters flowing where he marked their channels, the forests, enriched with a new creation of trees, standing where he planted them; in short, of something which, more than any scenery to which they had been accustomed, suggested the idea of unity and immensity, and abstracting the mind from the associations of human agency, carried it up to the idea of a mightier power, and to the great mystery of the origin of things.<sup>15</sup>

Only the first number of *The American Landscape* ever saw the light of day, yet its importance as an enterprise, and of Bennett's landscape in it, is too easily ignored. It was among the early published manifestations of Knickerbocker culture in New York City, with all its contributors (except James Smillie) members of the Sketch Club, an informal society of New York artists and writers, which was formed in 1829, the year before *The American Landscape* was published.<sup>16</sup> It was the pioneer of New York publications of American landscape views and narratives, anticipating such works as *The Home Book of the Picturesque* (1852; illustrated by several of the same artists, though not Bennett), *A Landscape Book of American Artists and Authors* (1868), and *Picturesque America* (ca. 1872–74), edited by Bryant.<sup>17</sup> And *The American Landscape* was an early step in Durand's transition from printmaking, portraiture, and genre painting to landscape, in which he succeeded Cole as patriarch of the Hudson River School. It may be that *The American Landscape* appeared too early in the history of both American tourism and American landscape art to succeed. Following the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, the United States witnessed a surge in foreign, especially British, visitors, many of whom published their experiences, in turn stimulating Americans' curiosity about their own countryside.<sup>18</sup> Still, *The American Landscape* reflects the germination of the New York landscape culture that blossomed in the 1840s with increasing tourism among Americans and the proliferation of landscape painters and their patrons.

To be sure, Bennett's *Weehawken* betrays the parochial character of *The American Landscape* compared to later gift books. The view was the first of six that ranged as far north as Lake Winnepesaukee in the White Mountains of New Hampshire (painted by Cole) and as far west as the Sawkill Creek in Milford, Pennsylvania (by Bennett). But half the views, echoing Wall's *Hudson River Portfolio*, were of sites along the Hudson River: the Catskill Mountains (by Durand), Fort Putnam in the Hudson Highlands (by Weir), and Weehawken. Bennett's image, preceding the others, represented the natural refuge—the shores of New Jersey—nearest to New York City. Turtle Grove, the vantage point

of Bennett's view, and the adjacent Elysian Fields of Hoboken, behind the viewer to the south, were already developing into a kind of genteel amusement park and promenade, an ancestor of Central Park, whose inception lay three decades ahead. The area, however, was not a true public park. It was the property of Colonel John Stevens, the owner of Castle Point, a high peninsula on the Hudson at Hoboken (see Figure 3). Stevens owned the steam ferries that began operating between New York and Hoboken in the early 1820s. Once he had established the ferry service, Stevens sought a reason for New Yorkers to use it. He prettified the acreage for a mile on either side of his house with lawns, paths, and willow trees and eventually established refreshment concessions, a circular railway ride, shuffleboard, a camera obscura, and an "incipient ferris wheel."<sup>19</sup> The only price of entry to Stevens's resort was the six-and-a-half-cent ferry ride, and by the 1830s on a given Sunday the Elysian Fields were drawing twenty thousand visitors from Gotham. Stevens or one of his agents gave the resort its pretentious classical name. Turtle Grove was located along the path leading north from Castle Point to Weehawken; its name originated in a club of gentlemen who caught and dined on green turtles at the site.<sup>20</sup>

Walking northward through Turtle Grove, visitors left the Elysian Fields, with the view upriver to the Weehawken bluffs providing a foretaste of the wilder natural beauties north along the Hudson, represented in two of the other plates in *The American Landscape*. One admirer of Bennett's picture conceded that there was little of the fearsomely sublime in the view north from Turtle Grove—"no mountain lifting its icy peak to heaven, no volcano, terrifying the surrounding world with its frightful fires, and no cataract shaking the earth beneath the awe-struck spectator's feet"—but asserted that "almost every other charm which can add attraction to nature may be found from the position chosen by the painter."<sup>21</sup>

As Bryant reminded his readers, the prospect was fraught with history and legend, no less than Fort Putnam and the Catskills miles to the north. Under the farther Weehawken bluff, he wrote, "lies the narrow level called the duelling ground, where [Alexander] Hamilton fell,"<sup>22</sup> mortally wounded by his political nemesis, Aaron Burr, in 1804. The nearer, rockier bluff, on the other hand, supported a natural parapet which Bryant identified as the Devil's Pulpit. He referred readers to a description of it in a recently published tale of the supernatural, a story he happened to have written.<sup>23</sup> The tale—"The Legend of the Devil's Pulpit"—undoubtedly influenced Bennett's selection, and possibly even the composition, of the view from Turtle Grove.



Figure 8. George B. Ellis (active 1821–30), after John Neilson. *The Devil's Pulpit*. Steel engraving, 2¼ x 3¼ in. (7 x 9.5 cm), published in *The Talisman for MDCCCXXVIII* (New York: Elam Bliss, 1827), facing p. 229 (photo: Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven)

Bryant's story was published in 1828 in *The Talisman*, an annual Knickerbocker anthology that ran to just three volumes (1828–30). *The Talisman* was a direct literary predecessor of *The American Landscape*. Under the pseudonym of Francis Herbert, Bryant and his friends Gulian C. Verplanck and Robert C. Sands collaborated on the varied content, comprising poetry, tales, travel description, and illustrations, many of them landscapes. The volumes were published by Elam Bliss, who later undertook publication of *The American Landscape*. Much of the *Talisman* material was conceived as the friends strolled around New York and at Weehawken and Hoboken, where Sands lived. Sands and Bryant actually wrote the bulk of the anthology: Verplanck preferred to feed them ideas or to dictate his contributions. For "The Legend of the Devil's Pulpit," Sands, the Hoboken resident, is thought to have provided the inspiration, Bryant the expression.<sup>24</sup> A more occasional contributor, Dr. John Neilson, a professor of anatomy at the National Academy of Design and a member of the Sketch Club, supplied an illustration of the site, which was published as the frontispiece of the annual (Figure 8).<sup>25</sup> From a literary point of view, the collaborators were undoubtedly prompted by the tales and legends of the Hudson shores collected in *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (London, 1820) by Washington Irving, the dean of the Knickerbocker writers, who had left America for England to become the first native author to be recognized internationally. Another, more contemporaneous, stimulus may have been the moral tales published weekly in the *New-York Mirror*.

Bryant's story relates the misadventures of an

improvident tailor of colonial New York who discovers that his only recent customer, a vain and ostentatious rake, has enriched himself in service to the devil, who commands a smuggling ring on the New Jersey shores below the Weehawken bluffs. In his text accompanying the engraving in *The American Landscape*, Bryant attributes the devil legend to the "frightful stories" circulated by actual smugglers of the period.<sup>26</sup> However, from his descriptions of the setting that open the story it is easy to imagine how the tale's fabulous characters and incident could have emerged from the stony, woody recesses of Weehawken's heights. Just as Bryant does later in *The American Landscape*, the narrator of the "Legend" first represents the bluffs from a distance, "striking in their effect . . . from the favourable points on the Jersey side of the river."<sup>27</sup> The narrator then transports the reader to the haunting midst of their forested crests:

As you stand on the summit of some moss-grown pile of rocks, where some veteran of the forest spreads his gnarled and projecting roots beside you, and extends his enormous and grotesque arms above your head, while monstrous grape vines are twisting and intertwining their serpent and never-ending coils, hanging in fantastic writhings and complications from one trunk or bough to another,—you look down on these woods as they descend to the meadow, and the beams of the sinking sun strike through their winding alleys or glorify their many-coloured masses; and you realize more than is dreamt of in the tales of oriental enchantment.<sup>28</sup>

In this evocative precinct is the famed rock of the title, and it is here that the poor tailor, secretly pursuing his client across the Hudson, discovers the demon holding court from his "pulpit," overlooking the great river and the infant metropolis. The tailor solicits the aid of a city shaman, a Calvinist physician named Magraw, who confronts the devil on his throne and throttles him. In the exorcism's aftermath, the righteous doctor momentarily assumes the pulpit himself. From there he peers down the decades to Bryant's time, musing of New York's citizenry that it "will go the way of all flesh":

Half a century hence, they will be as wicked as the Londoners. With the same vices they will have more wit. But what of that? So much the worse for them. . . . They will have their Stock Market and their New Market; and there will be bulls and bears, lame ducks, rooks and pigeons in both of them. They will have lotteries and operas and elopements and cracked poets and ballets and burlettas and Italian singers and French dancers. And every second man in a good coat, will be a broker or a lawyer or an insolvent. And there will be no more cash payments; but the women will wear cashmeres, and the men will drink cham-

pagne. . . . And they will run after the heels of every quack who comes among them, and think he is the devil himself, though he has not half the sense of the dirty little devil that I have just discharged.<sup>29</sup>

The divine associations of American scenery expressed in Bryant's preface to *The American Landscape* seem to contradict the imagery of the earlier "Legend of the Devil's Pulpit." There, Bryant's narrator linked the Weehawken bluffs with the origin of New York's presumption to wealth and its concomitant moral decline. That the origin is located outside both city and state seems no accident, and savors of the competitiveness that has traditionally marked relations between New York and New Jersey. Bryant may even be evoking the colonial tradition (originating in the southern Pine Barrens area of the state) of the Jersey Devil: his narrator relates in the closing sentences of the story that "very recently, the people at Weehawken and Hoboken began to talk about a fantastic figure, who was seen upon bright moon-shiny nights, seated on that precipice, especially during sittings of the New Jersey Legislature."<sup>30</sup>

The subtle finger-pointing of Bryant's narrator may be misleading, or at least ambiguous. At the end of the tale he himself assumes Dr. Magraw's place on the Devil's Pulpit and "admits the peculiar metaphysical effect produced by visiting this rock. . . . Dreams of wealth, projects of ambition, conceits of vanity, are there engendered in my brain. Visions of pleasure, pomp, and power there come like shadows,—and depart as you descend."<sup>31</sup> Yet, as the narrator reminds us earlier in the story, the pulpit was itself the vantage point of a seductive prospect "of the island of New-York,"

sprinkled with its villages and villas, and terminating in the city, with all its spires and towers—of the intervening river and the spacious harbour, the green windings of the Jersey shores, and the distant hills of Staten Island. You see the white sails gleaming and gliding to and fro on the broad waters beneath you; you hear the quick heavy beat of paddles from the steam-boats; and when the air is more than commonly quiet, the everlasting murmur and coil of the great city hums drowsily on your ear.<sup>32</sup>

The city prospect is almost precisely the one memorably recorded by Bennett's colleague Wall in one of the two large watercolors (Figure 3) painted a few years earlier and published by Megarey. The narrator's enthralled description of this view, preceding both Dr. Magraw's pessimistic musings on it and his own later demonic enchantment at the Devil's Pulpit, suggests that the powers of the place arose not merely from its haunting ambience but from the God's-eye contemplation of Gotham from its heights.<sup>33</sup>

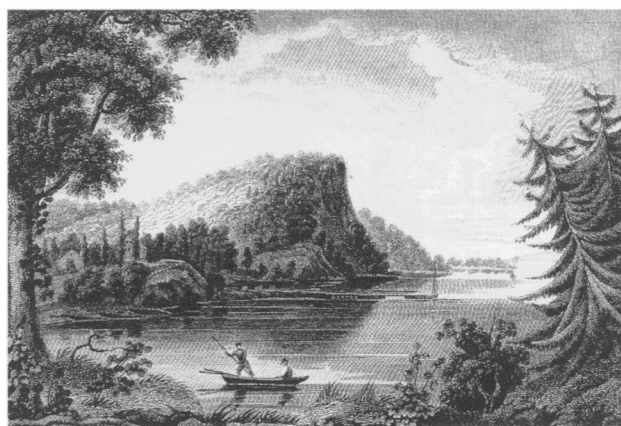


Figure 9. George B. Ellis, after John Neilson. *Weehawken*. Steel engraving, 2¼ x 4 in. (7 x 10.2 cm), published in *The Talisman for MDCCCXXIX* (New York: Elam Bliss, 1828), facing p. 221 (photo: Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven)

"The Legend of the Devil's Pulpit" was not the only instance in which Weehawken figured in the pages of *The Talisman*. In the number for 1829, published in 1828, appeared the poem "Weehawken," accompanied by a rather crude image of the bluffs drawn by Neilson and engraved by George B. Ellis (Figure 9). Anticipating Bryant's commentary on the *Weehawken* plate, the poem alluded both to smugglers and to Hamilton's death below the bluffs:

Spoils, strangely won on distant waves,  
Have lurked in yon obstructed caves. . . .

And here, when Freedom's strife was won,  
Fell, in sad feud, her favoured son. . . .<sup>34</sup>

Bennett, then, had a variety of motivations, pictorial and literary, to portray the Weehawken bluffs. His colleague Wall had already painted (and published) the view of New York from Weehawken; Neilson had represented the bluffs themselves, although in terms feeble enough perhaps to have stimulated Bennett to surpass that image; the bluffs were part of a prospect from a popular New York resort and retained a natural character that evoked the more majestic glories of the upper Hudson; and, thanks to Bryant, Bennett's Sketch Club colleague, Weehawken was redolent with literary associations that reflected on New York City's virtuous colonial past and her licentious commercial future. Among other things, then, Bennett's view was of a fabled standpoint, one made resonant by Bryant's tale. As readily as one may interpret the boulders posed in the foreground of the watercolor as formal analogues of the distant bluffs, one is tempted to imagine that they deliberately intimate the legendary stone perched upon them.



The past truly is a foreign land. Today one looks hard in Hoboken for either Bennett's subject or his point of view. Barge piers, factories, and condominiums fill the bay that washes the concrete shore of the former Turtle Grove and completely block the view north to the Weehawken bluffs. The bluffs are still visible from the heights of Castle Point (now the campus of the Stevens Institute of Technology) but may best be seen from a car or bus on the ramp of the Lincoln Tunnel, commuting to or from Manhattan. And on the once-prominent bluff—until recently miraculously undeveloped—that included the Devil's Pulpit, a latter-day Magraw has just begun building a house with a view for which some might still sell their souls.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author is grateful to Joelle Gotlib, Vivian Chill, Claire A. Conway, and Kenneth French for their assistance with the research for this article.

#### APPENDIX 1

W. C. Bryant, "Weehawken," in *The American Landscape*, engraved by Asher B. Durand, printed by E. Wade (New York: Elam Bliss, 1830), pp. 7–8.

The view which bears this name is taken from a fine grove skirting the southern edge of the Weehawken meadows, on the Jersey shore of the Hudson, opposite the northern part of the city of New-York. To arrive at this spot, you proceed from the village of Hoboken, by one of the most beautiful walks in the world. For a considerable distance after leaving the Hoboken ferry, the shore of the river is steep, and covered with forest trees, among which the enterprising proprietors of the soil have formed broad and smooth paths for the convenience of the public, to whom these delightful grounds have been thrown open. The paths wind in various directions along the sides and summit of the steep bank, sometimes coming close to the edge, where it impends over the water, and at other times conducting you to an opening on some elevated point, which commands a view of the city of New-York and the harbour, magnificent for its vast breadth, its varied and populous shores, its scattered islands, its three great passages to the ocean, and the mighty commerce arriving and departing on its bosom. Nothing can exceed the beauty of these walks about the close of May, when the verdure of the turf is as bright as the green of the rainbow; and when the embowering shrubs are in flower, among which the dogwood and the viburnum, white as if loaded with snow, and the sassafras, with its faint yellow blossoms, are conspicuous; and the hum of innumerable bees over the heads of the well dressed throng passing to and fro, mingles with the buzz of voices and the murmurs of the shore. In the sunny nooks of this bank, long before the trees have put forth their leaves, and while the place is yet unprofaned by city feet, the earliest blossoms of the year are found—violets are in bloom before the vernal equinox—

They come before the swallow dares, and take  
The winds of March with beauty.

During the warm season great numbers of people resort thither from New-York, some of whom cross the ferry for the sake of a purer and cooler atmosphere, and others attracted by the beauty of the spot—

White muslined misses and mammas are seen  
Linked with gay cockneys glittering o'er the green\*—

and the wood-nymphs are astonished at seeing stalls for selling ice cream and various liquid refreshments set up in their sylvan recesses.

Having reached the place about a mile above the Hoboken ferry, from which the accompanying view is taken, a striking scene arrests your attention. The river widens to the north of you into a kind of shallow bay, resting on the Weehawken meadows, within which, at most hours of the day, the swell of the tide is perceived only in gentle undulations of the glassy surface. Looking across this bay, you see, rising directly over the meadows, the first of the Weehawken bluffs, on the brow of which is the famous rock called the Devil's Pulpit, described in the first volume of the *Talisman*. Here, according to an old tradition, the devil used to preach every Friday to a congregation from New-York, until driven off by Dr. M'Graw; the explanation of which is thought to be, that the spot was the haunt of a gang of smugglers, who circulated frightful stories respecting the place, and who were at length discovered and broken up by the eccentric doctor.<sup>†</sup> Further up the river, and rising almost perpendicularly over it, is the second Weehawken bluff, under the east side of which lies the narrow level called the duelling ground, where Hamilton fell. Still further north, along the western shore, you descry the Palisades, long, dark and lofty walls of perpendicular rock, diminishing in the distance, until the western shore, with its barren precipices and wild solitudes, and the eastern shore, with its soft declivities, its dwellings and gardens, seem to meet, and the river disappears.

The time for contemplating this scene in all its beauty, is near sunset, when the glorious hues of the sky seem to tinge the very substance of the waters; when the sails of the passing barks are gilded with the horizontal sunshine; when the steam boats of the Hudson are seen majestically furrowing the waters on their departure or their return; when the dwellings on the New-York shore, reflecting the setting sun from their windows, appear like palaces of topaz; and when, if the atmosphere be still, a mighty and multitudinous murmur of human activity reaches you from all parts and streets of the far-off city at once, and the tolling of the hour from its steeples comes softened by distance into the faintest and sweetest of sounds.

\*Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin.

†On this bluff is also situated the singular rock called *Mambrino's Helmet*, an engraving of which is given on the cover.

## APPENDIX 2

"Description of the Plate: Weehawken," *New-York Mirror*, April 20, 1833, p. 329.

To speak of Weehawken to a New-Yorker is to conjure up before his mind's eye a world of agreeable associations; and pleasant indeed will it be in his recollection, if he be far absent from his native city. It will bring before him a picture of beautiful scenery, which, if not the most lovely in the world, the goodnatured reader will pardon him for thinking so. He will remember a bay encircled by blue hills, studded with bright islands, and enlivened with vessels of every description, from the giant war-ship sleeping, like a castle, on the water, to the winged pleasure-boat that sweeps along like a bird, or the steamboat thundering and ploughing on its way, careless of wind and tide. There is here, it is true, no mountain lifting its icy peak to heaven, no volcano, terrifying the surrounding world with its frightful fires, and no cataract shaking the earth beneath the awe-struck spectator's feet, while clouds of foam float away on the breeze, spanned by the rainbow fallen from the sky; but almost every other charm which can add attraction to nature may be found from the position chosen by the painter of the accompanying view. The spectator is supposed to stand on the Jersey shore, about a mile above the Hoboken ferry. It is impossible to confine our pen to the description alone of those two elevations called the Weehawken bluffs. The whole scene which greets the passenger's eye, from the moment when he leaves the city ferry till he arrives at the spot represented in the foreground of the engraving is distinguished for a degree of rich romantic and picturesque loveliness, reminding one of some of the delicious delineations of scenery in the *Lady of the Lake*.

For the information of distant readers, we are more minute in our details than we should be were we writing only for the eyes of our fellow-citizens; for sluggish indeed must be the foot that has trodden near these tranquil Eden scenes, and not often pressed the grass among their groves. A line of steamboats plies across the river from a central part of the city to the village of Hoboken, conveying passengers from the reflected heat and dust of the crowded streets into the midst of a rural scene, in a few moments and for a few cents. A green swell of land is generally in pleasant afternoons during the summer months, found swarmed with people of every class, among whom always is an agreeable preponderance of women and children. Here are various simple amusements to beguile the time: shuffle-board—a swing—a circular rail-road, most unexceptionable milk-punch, &c. Groups of tired citizens,

seated in chairs, inhale the cool breezes and enjoy the refreshing prospect; and we never remember to have been so exquisitely delighted by a trifle as we were one day here by a large *camera obscura* drawn to the summit of this acclivity, and revealing to the eyes of those who chose to pay six-pence and take their stand within—wonders—fairy wonders—than which, we believe, nothing in all the range of art and nature could be more enchanting. Children who have never beheld this exquisite optical exhibition, should be initiated forthwith into its magical displays; and if we were the enterprising and tasteful proprietors of those delightful pleasure-grounds, which, with a commendable liberality have been thrown open for the gratuitous accommodation of the public, we should have one erected permanently, if it were only to watch and enjoy the surprise and delight so vivid and graceful in the faces of our youthful friends.

From this point, a path, which might have wound through Paradise and allured our first sinless parents, hand in hand, along its tempting and fragrant windings, leads on, over the meadow land, to the rocks and trees visible in the front of the picture. This commands a fine prospect. From elevated banks—overhanging woods—meandering paths—from hedges of scented verdure, and cool sylvan recesses, you come suddenly to the open tract and the low shore—where the water spreads out like a lake, sometimes swollen with the tide, and sometimes sleeping in glassy calmness, or only, at intervals, as some steamboat rushes on its course, heaving the long billow, heavily and beautifully to the beach. Across this bay, to the north, you see the first of the Weehawken bluffs. Further up the river is the other. Under the east side of the latter lies the duelling ground, consecrated, in the pages of history, by the blood of Hamilton. On the brow of the former is the renowned rock, called the Devil's Pulpit. Tradition affirms that his satanic majesty used to preach from this rock every Friday, to a New-York congregation, until driven away by Dr. M'Graw. For the truth of this, however, we shall not be responsible, but rather lean towards the less marvellous accounts which represent the spot as the haunt of a gang of smugglers, whose interest in circulating stories of this nature is obvious, and who were finally broken up by Dr. M'Graw.

The admirer of nature may seek this spot as an appropriate shrine on which to offer up his devotions. At all times of the season—at all hours of the day, it cannot fail to stir up, in the coldest heart, some sparkle of enthusiasm. In the opening spring, in the tranquil, shadowy summer, or the golden, teeming autumn, it is always invested with seducing loveliness. On a still, soft, dewy, summer morning, when every

object around is at rest, when the very wind and waters scarcely move—when the sails hang against the masts, and the river-craft lapse along almost imperceptibly with the tide, the view, from the Weehawken hill, may perhaps be seen to most advantage; though probably the sunset hour, with its richer colourings and repose, may exercise over the imagination, an influence more sweet and soothing. At all times, however, the place has been the theme of remark and admiration. The poet and the painter have united their powers to celebrate it; and it will probably afford a subject of illustration to pen and pencil for generations yet to come.

## NOTES

1. For Arnold, see the obituary in the *New York Times*, February 8, 1954, p. 23.
2. *Two Hundred Years of Watercolor Painting in America: An Exhibition Commemorating the Centennial of the American Watercolor Society*, exh. cat. (New York: MMA, 1966), p. 13, no. 28; Albert Ten Eyck Gardner, *History of Watercolor Painting in America* (New York: Reinhold, 1966), p. 27, pl. 12; Stuart P. Feld, "Preview of an Exhibition: Two Hundred Years of Watercolor Painting in America," *Antiques* 90 (December 1966), p. 845, fig. 11; John K. Howat, *The Hudson River and Its Painters* (New York: Viking, 1972), p. 162, no. 54; Stephen C. Rubin, ed., *American Watercolors from The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, exh. cat. (New York: American Federation of Arts in association with Harry N. Abrams, 1991), p. 64, no. 25; Tracy Felker, *Master Drawings of the Hudson River School*, exh. cat. (Manlius, N.Y.: Gallery Association of New York State, 1993), pp. 1, 4.
3. Many of Wall's original watercolors for *The Hudson River Portfolio* are in the New-York Historical Society. They are discussed in Donald A. Shelley, "William Guy Wall's Watercolors for *The Hudson River Portfolio*," *New-York Historical Society Quarterly* 31 (January 1947), pp. 25–45. Both *The Hudson River Portfolio* and Hill's aquatints of Wall's pair of watercolors of New York City, published by Megarey, are thoroughly documented in Richard C. Koke, *A Checklist of the American Engravings of John Hill (1770–1850)* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1961), pp. 29–44; and Gloria Gilda Deák, *Picturing America, 1497–1899* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), vol. 1, pp. 217–19, 228–30. For a more recent discussion of Wall's work, see Edward C. Nygren, *Views and Visions: American Landscape before 1830*, exh. cat. (Washington, D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1986), pp. 298–302.
4. Gardner, *History*, p. 27, pl. 12; Feld, "Preview," p. 845, fig. 11; Howat, *Hudson River*, p. 162, no. 54.
5. For Bennett, see the excellent essay in Gloria Gilda Deák, *William James Bennett: Master of the Aquatint View*, exh. cat. (New York: New York Public Library, 1988), pp. 13–64, 67–69 (chronology).
6. For the Metropolitan watercolor, see Rubin, *American Watercolors*, pp. 15, 55. For the print, see Deák, *Bennett*, pp. 32, 74; Deák, *Picturing America*, vol. 1, p. 244; and Elliot Bostwick Davis, "The Currency of Culture: Prints in New York City," in Catherine Hoover Voorsanger and John K. Howat, eds., *Art and the Empire*

- City: New York, 1825–1861, exh. cat. (New York: MMA, 2000), p. 201, fig. 158.
7. For *View of the Bay of New York from the Battery, N.Y.C.*, see Richard J. Koke, *American Landscape and Genre Paintings in the New-York Historical Society* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1982), vol. 1, p. 40, no. 136; for *View on the Potomac, Looking toward Harper's Ferry*, see Linda S. Ferber and Barbara Dayer Gallati, *Masters of Color and Light: Homer, Sargent and the American Watercolor Movement*, exh. cat., Brooklyn Museum of Art (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999), pp. 6–7.
  8. *The American Landscape, No. 1. Containing the Following Views: Weehawken, Catskill Mountains, Fort Putnam, Delaware Water Gap, Falls of the Sawkill, Winnipiseogee Lake. Engraved from Original and Accurate Drawings; Executed from Nature Expressly for this Work, and from Well Authenticated Pictures; with Historical and Topographical Illustrations* (New York: Elam Bliss, 1830).
  9. "Description of the Plate: Weehawken," *New-York Mirror*, April 20, 1833, p. 329. The editors of the *Mirror* were Nathaniel Parker Willis, George W. Curtis, and Theodore Fay, all of whom wrote travel literature and any of whom could have authored the text for the plate.
  10. *National Academy of Design Exhibition Record, 1826–1860* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1943), vol. 1, p. 30, no. 99.
  11. *The American Landscape*, pp. 8–9.
  12. *National Academy of Design Exhibition Record*, vol. 1, p. 30, no. 90; "Description of the Plate: Falls of the Sawkill," *New-York Mirror*, May 25, 1833, p. 369.
  13. A. B. Durand and E. Wade, Jun., "Prospectus of The American Landscape," *The American Landscape*, p. 4.
  14. William C. Bryant, "Preface," *The American Landscape*, pp. 5–6.
  15. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
  16. For a description of the Sketch Club, see James T. Callow, *Kindred Spirits: Knickerbocker Writers and American Artists* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), pp. 12–29.
  17. *The Home Book of the Picturesque: or American Scenery, Art, and Literature* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1852); *A Landscape Book of American Artists and Authors* (New York: G. P. Putnam and Son, 1868); *Picturesque America; or The Land We Live In* (New York: D. Appleton, ca. 1872–74); Callow, *Kindred Spirits*, pp. 164–72.
  18. The earliest and one of the most influential of this tide of British visitors was Captain Basil Hall, *Travels in North America, in the Years 1827 and 1828* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea and Carey, 1829); see also Mrs. Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (London: Whittaker, Treacher, and Co., 1832); [Thomas Hamilton], *Men and Manners in America, by the Author of Cecil Thornton* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and T. Cadell, 1833); Tyrone Power, *Impressions of America during the Years 1833, 1834, and 1835* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea, and Blanchard, 1836); Harriet Martineau, *Society in America* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1837); and *Retrospect of Western Travels* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1838).
  19. For Hoboken's Elysian Fields and Turtle Grove, see Charles H. Winfield, *Hopoghan Hackingh: Hoboken, a Pleasure Resort for Old New York* (New York: Caxton, 1895), pp. 33–80 (the "incipient ferris wheel," or "Whirligig," is illustrated and described on pp. 71–72); *The Record of the Progress of the Hoboken Evening News, Together with the History of the City of Hoboken, from Its Settlement to the Present Time* (Hoboken, N.J.: Evening News, 1893), pp. 11–13; Samuel L. Knapp, *The Picturesque Beauties of the Hudson River and Its Vicinity* (New York: J. Disturnell, 1835), pp. 4–24; William H. Shaw, *History of Essex and Hudson Counties, New Jersey* (Philadelphia: Everts and Peck, 1884), vol. 2, pp. 1311–12; G. G. Foster, *Fifteen Minutes around New York* (New York: DeWitt and Davenport, 1854), pp. 52–54.
  20. Winfield, *Hopoghan Hackingh*, p. 54.
  21. *New-York Mirror*, April 20, 1833, p. 329.
  22. Bryant, "Weehawken," *The American Landscape*, p. 8.
  23. *Ibid.*, p. 8: "Looking across this bay [on the west side of the Hudson River at Hoboken], you see, rising directly over the meadows, the first of the Weehawken bluffs, on the brow of which is the famous rock called the Devil's Pulpit, described in the first volume of the *Talisman*."
  24. For *The Talisman*, see Henry C. Sturges and Richard Henry Stoddard, eds., *The Poetical Works of William Cullen Bryant* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1910), pp. xlix–l, cxii; Callow, *Kindred Spirits*, pp. 25–26; Charles H. Brown, *William Cullen Bryant* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), pp. 164–72, 182–83.
  25. Callow, *Kindred Spirits*, p. 15.
  26. Bryant, "Weehawken," *The American Landscape*, p. 8.
  27. Francis Herbert [W. C. Bryant (and Robert C. Sands?)], "The Legend of the Devil's Pulpit," in *The Talisman for MDCCCXXVIII* (New York: Elam Bliss, 1827), p. 230.
  28. Herbert, "Devil's Pulpit," p. 231.
  29. *Ibid.*, pp. 283–85.
  30. *Ibid.*, p. 288. For a discussion of the Jersey Devil tradition, see Jeremiah Sullivan with James F. McCloy, "The Jersey Devil's Finest Hour," *New York Folklore Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (September 1974), pp. 232–39.
  31. Herbert, "Devil's Pulpit," pp. 287–88.
  32. *Ibid.*, p. 233.
  33. What appears to be an admiring description of the view of New York from Weehawken, evidently prompted by the 1823 publication of Wall's view by Megarey and anticipating Bryant's descriptions of the city from New Jersey in *The Talisman* and *The American Landscape*, was printed in the *New-York Mirror*, September 27, 1823, p. 68.
  34. "Weehawken," *The Talisman for MDCCCXXIX* (New York: Elam Bliss, 1828), p. 222, engraving facing p. 221.