

Bauke Ritsert Rinsma

# EYEWITNESS TO UTOPIA

SCIENTIFIC CONQUEST AND COMMUNAL SETTLEMENT  
IN C.-A. LESUEUR'S SKETCHES OF THE FRONTIER

Foreword by:

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Main subjects:

Sketches of the United States of America and early American utopias (1816-1837); Charles-Alexandre Lesueur (1778-1846), explorer, geologist, zoologist and natural history painter; William Maclure (1763-1840), father of American geology and utopian philosopher; Robert Owen (1771-1858), British social reformer and utopian philosopher; early history of New Harmony, Indiana (1814-1837); early history of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia (1812-1825); early history of the United States Geological Survey (1839-1879); Pestalozzian schools of Joseph Neef (1770-1854) and Marie Duclos Fretageot (1783-1833); Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827).

Also in this book:

History of lithography in the USA (1807-1822); creation of the Smithsonian Institution (1836-1856); Lewis and Clark expedition (1803-1806); Stephen. H. Long expedition (1819-1820); American Revolution (1775-1783); Louisiana Purchase (1803); War of 1812; United States Boundary Commission (1819); Harmonists in America (1803-1832); Moravians in America (1741-1825); English settlements on Prairie Albion, Illinois (1825-1826); slave emancipation in Nashoba, Tennessee (1825-1830); Valley Forge retreat of George Washington (1732-1799); Declaration of Independence and Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826); boyhood of Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865).

With contemporaneous illustrations, photographs, maps, bibliography, index and notes.  
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## CONTENTS

<b>Foreword</b>	xi	<b>Chapter 2</b>	
<b>Author's Preface</b>	xxiii	<b>Lesueur and Maclure's Travels in the Northeast</b>	45
<b>List of Consulted Archives and Abbreviations</b>	xxiv	Maclure and Lesueur: Precursors of Uniformitarianism	47
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	xxv	First Evidence of an Interest in Utopian Societies	49
		William Maclure's Carefully Defined Utilitarian Objective	54
		A Model of the American Utopian Experience	61
		<b>Chapter 3</b>	
<b>Prologue</b>	1	<b>Dissemination of Knowledge in the Land of Jefferson</b>	79
		Thomas Jefferson's Quest for Knowledge	81
		C.-A. Lesueur's Place in American Scientific Circles	85
		Pioneering New Printing Techniques	90
<b>Introduction</b>	9	Charles-Alexandre Lesueur: Printer and Businessman	93
		<b>Chapter 4</b>	
<b>Chapter 1</b>		<b>Lesueur's Prolonged Stay in Philadelphia</b>	97
<b>How Prometheus Defied the Gods of Olympus</b>	23	The Long Expedition and Lesueur's Relation with France	99
Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, Protégé of William Maclure	25	Failure of a Social Experiment in Spain	104
Lesueur and the Clan of the McClures	28	The New School and Lesueur's Pupils	106
William Maclure: Disciple of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi	33	A New Inexpensive Means of Diffusing Knowledge	121
Propagation of Pestalozzi's Method: First Efforts	36	Victories in Philadelphia but a Defeat in France	123
Maclure's Contract with Lesueur: A New Beginning	41		

## Chapter 5

<b>Robert Owen's Utopian Venture in New Harmony</b>	129
The Social Reformer of New Lanark	131
Owen's Invective on the Misdeeds of Industrialization	132
Utopia in Indiana: From New Lanark to New Harmony	137
Organizing and Financing the Social Utopia	140
Were African Americans Excluded from this Paradise?	152

## Chapter 6

<b>Lesueur's Reasons for Joining Owen in Indiana</b>	159
Utopian Meditations During the Summer of 1825	162
The Cooperative Society of Moravian Nazareth	168
Charles-Alexandre Lesueur's Meditative Nature	179
A Precipitate Departure	182

## Chapter 7

<b>The Mayflower of Intellectual Colonization</b>	189
C.-A. Lesueur: Father of a Small Family	191
Robert Owen Announces his Millennium of Peace	194
The Boat Load of Knowledge	200
Sojourn at Economy: Example of a Millenarian Movement	202

## Chapter 8

<b>The Odyssey and the Philosophers</b>	227
Maclure's Philosophical Nature	229
The Pilgrimage in the Ice	233
Reunion in Louisville	239
Debacle at Mount Vernon	247

## Chapter 9

<b>The New Harmony Community of Equality</b>	257
The Difficult Debut of the Ideal City	259
The Athens of the West?	272
Testimony of a Famous Painter	276
Lesueur and Troost's Utilitarian Mission	280

## Chapter 10

<b>Quarrels Ruin the Cooperative System</b>	293
Lesueur's Scientific Work in and around New Harmony	295
Marie Fretageot's Coup d'Etat	306
Owen and Maclure's Duel	321
Maclure's Pecuniary Loss and its Consequences	329
The Angel and the Serpent	332
The Queen of the North	337

<b>Conclusion</b>	351
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<b>Epilogue &amp; List of Eyewitnesses and Participants</b>	365
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<b>Notes</b>	373
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<b>C.-A. Lesueur's Publications &amp; Bibliography</b>	407
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<b>List of Illustrations</b>	421
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<b>General Index</b>	431
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<b>Chronological and Thematic Index</b>	459
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Bust of Charles-Alexandre Lesueur – sculpted by Joseph E. A. Mezzara in 1844 and cast in bronze in 1879

*Courtesy of the Natural History Museum in Le Havre*

## FOREWORD BY DONALD E. PITZER

Charles-Alexandre Lesueur's sketchbooks are the enduring work of an exceptional "eyewitness to utopia." Lesueur experienced the utopian quest that was inherent in the early American Republic—the pursuit of happiness through the rights of liberty and justice, the progress in knowledge through discoveries in science, and the promise of perfection through experiments in communal living. In his sketchbooks, Lesueur left his legacy, thousands of meticulously detailed drawings—an unparalleled record of one man's embrace of the spirit, environment, and life forms he found on extensive travels as a natural scientist and teacher in the United States from 1816 to 1837. However, Lesueur left scant accounts in writing, either in his native French or his limited English. Therefore, Dutch historian Bauke Ritsert Rinsma chose the daunting task of searching out, analyzing, and compiling the story of Lesueur's adventures and accomplishments as expressed through his masterful artwork.

The author's research took him to archival collections of primary importance in Europe and America, especially the Working Men's Institute in New Harmony, Indiana, and the Lesueur Collection at the Natural History Museum in Le Havre, France, and to venues sketched by Lesueur across the eastern United States. Many of the drawings he has chosen for this book have never been published before as images digitally restored to their original colorful realism. Informative captions and engaging narrative bring them to life. Ritsert Rinsma also inserts recent photographs taken from Lesueur's historical vantage points to give readers a comparative view. Much of the historical content is presented in refreshingly new perspectives, analyses, and interpretations, ultimately focusing on Robert Owen's utopian New Harmony in

Indiana. There Lesueur lavished his energies and talents as one of the 782 official communal members—including scientists and educators from Philadelphia and families from the frontier—whose names and other information are helpfully brought together for the first time in an annotated list by Ritsert Rinsma. In all, this work provides American readers their first opportunity to view early nineteenth-century utopias through the eyes of an artistic eyewitness: Charles-Alexandre Lesueur.

Lesueur is one of the last major naturalists from Thomas Jefferson's age of exploration whose story has not been sufficiently told. His recognition has taken far too long, which does not mean that Lesueur's work was not noted and recognized in his native France before and after his arrival in America. He participated in Captain Nicolas Baudin's expedition to Australia, sponsored by Napoleon from 1800 to 1804, and rose into the earliest elite circle of natural scientists—which included such giants as his mentor Georges Cuvier, the great French zoologist and paleontologist. In 1815 William Maclure (already considered the Father of American Geology) would also become Lesueur's mentor and benefactor, offering him a contract to accompany Maclure on his next geological exploration of the United States. Lesueur's subsequent travels, discoveries and artwork with his patron resulted in an updated edition of Maclure's 1809 groundbreaking work *Observations on the Geology of the United States*.

Since Maclure and Lesueur made their home base in the culturally and scientifically rich Philadelphia, Lesueur soon became a rising star among the most noted naturalists and teachers in America. He was made curator of the Academy

of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia. He was elected a member of the American Philosophical Society and came to know its earlier president Thomas Jefferson. As Ritsert Rinsma reveals, he so revered Jefferson's utopian assertion of human rights in the Declaration of Independence that he drew a scene through the window of the house where Jefferson wrote the first draft. Moreover, Lesueur's scientific knowledge and artistic ability made him a prized educator in Maclure's Pestalozzian-type school as well as in several boarding schools for children of the city's wealthiest citizens. His proficiency as a printer brought Lesueur to introduce innovations in engraving and lithography in Philadelphia, technologies he continued to improve in Maclure's School of Industry in New Harmony. His skill as a surveyor won him an appointment by the United States government to establish the earliest boundary between this country and Canada. In 1825 Lesueur's urban life and scientific venue changed dramatically as he, along with others of Philadelphia's finest scientists and educators, was lured to the utopian adventure of making new discoveries in the wilderness around New Harmony, and of teaching in Maclure's and Owen's progressive schools. Now, finally, *Eyewitness to Utopia* validates Lesueur's rightful place of prominence among artists, scientists, and communitarians.

As a gifted artist, Lesueur became one of the most important "photographers" of his day, documenting the towns and landscapes, flora, fauna, and fossils he found from the Atlantic coast to the Great Lakes and to the Ohio, Wabash and Mississippi Rivers. In 1816, when Lesueur accompanied William Maclure on an exploration of the route Governor DeWitt Clinton was considering for his projected Erie Canal, Lesueur's drawings became a priceless record of a landscape soon to be changed forever. When, in 1825-1826, Lesueur came down the Ohio River on the famous "boatload of knowledge," he scanned the countryside and preserved for posterity the towns and landscapes along its banks. During this voyage, sponsored by Maclure, Lesueur captured graphic scenes from the keelboat bound for utopian New Harmony, which had been purchased from the Harmony Society by

industrialist and social reformer Robert Owen. He also recorded memorable images of the scientists, educators, and their students aboard as they endured the hardship of being trapped in the ice for an entire month and discussed how they would help bring Owen's and Maclure's utopian dreams to reality. New Harmony and its environs became a decade-long object of study preserved forever through the lens of Lesueur's artistic talent.

As a prolific natural scientist, Lesueur made innumerable explorations to find new specimens in his fields of interest from A to Z: archeology, conchology, entomology, herpetology, geology, ichthyology, mineralogy, ornithology, paleontology and zoology. His research contributed fundamental evidence in every field of science he studied. While in New Harmony, he enthusiastically searched out and sketched never-before-recorded animals, plants and fossils, as well as Native American artifacts, in the ancient yet living laboratory of the surrounding frontier. Lesueur played a crucial role in making New Harmony an early national center for geological research, exploration and training. Ritsert Rinsma makes clear that it was Charles-Alexandre Lesueur's knowledge and enthusiasm that lured Owen's sons David Dale Owen and Richard Owen into this promising new field. Without Lesueur's instruction, the Owen brothers might never have become Indiana's first two state geologists. Their renowned New Harmony-based geological explorations, laboratories and classes might never have come to be or the mineral resources discovered which helped lead to the industrialization of the Midwest.

As a committed communitarian in New Harmony, Charles-Alexandre Lesueur embraced the opportunity of becoming a member of America's first secular, socialistic communal utopian experiment. The potent ideas and financial underwriting of its two founding philanthropists would surely assure its success. William Maclure's utopian faith in practical Pestalozzian education to improve the economic and political standing of the working classes would merge with Robert Owen's utopian belief that enlightened



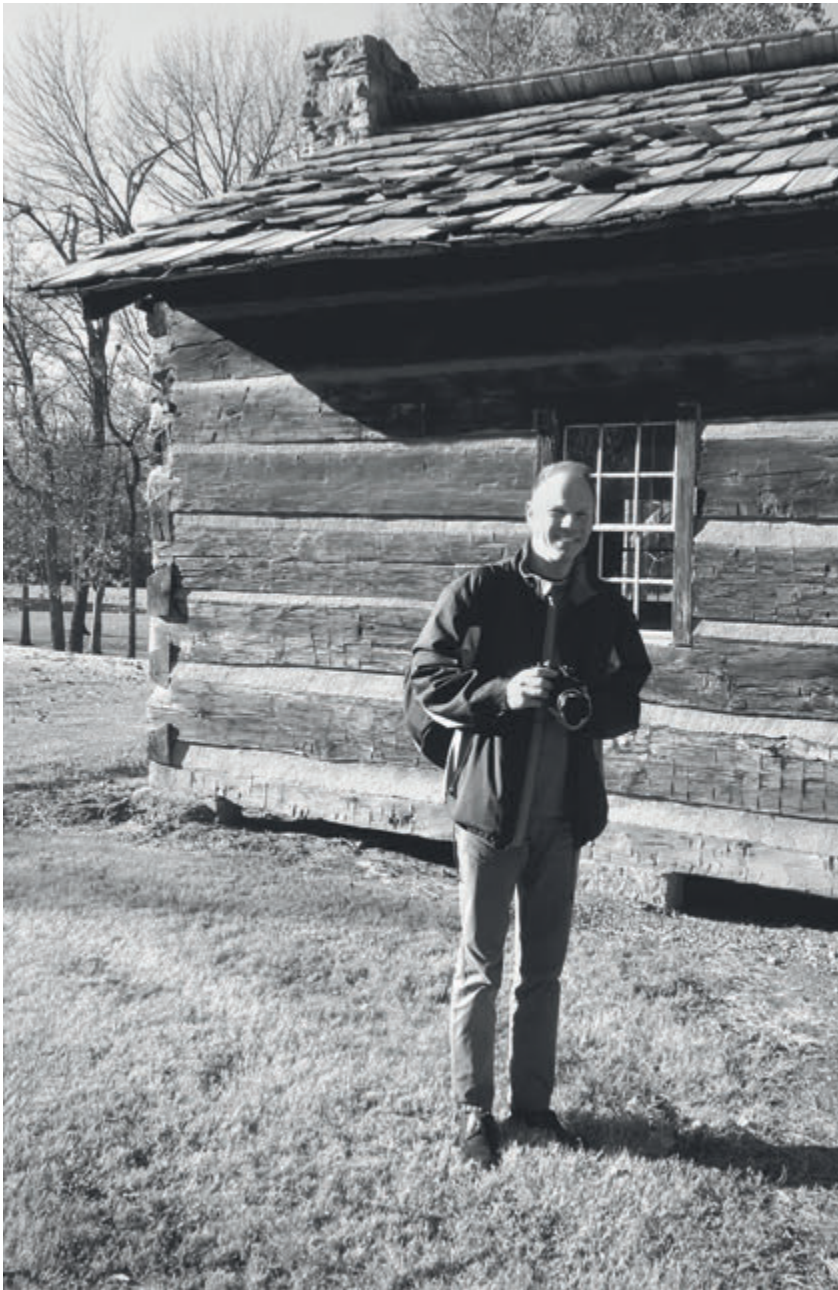
education from infancy could reform human character and combine with advances in science and commodious communal living to create a New Moral World of peace and plenty. Besides, Lesueur and Maclure themselves were partially prepared for life as communitarians. Their fascination with the scientific, educational and economic innovations of two of the most famous religious movements that chose to live communally in America had led them to visit towns of the Moravians at Bethlehem and Nazareth, and the Harmony Society at Harmony and Economy in Pennsylvania. There they observed and recorded the benefits and demands of communal living historians now see as an age-old method of organization which has offered security, solidarity and survival to religious and secular groups the world over. Lesueur made painstakingly accurate sketches documenting not only these successful Moravian and Harmonist communal sites but later also those of Owenite New Harmony, the English community called Wanborough at Albion, Illinois, and the anti-slavery advocate Frances Wright's attempt to use communal living to free slaves at Nashoba, Tennessee. Drawing these sketches of multiple American communal settlements, brought together for the first time in Ritsert Rinsma's vivid reproductions, became one of Lesueur's unique eyewitness contributions to America's utopian history. No other artist attempted this before or since.

The author also reveals Lesueur as a gentleman with the common touch. In New Harmony, the French naturalist relished equally wading into the Wabash up to his neck with a student to find shells with their toes or discussing natural science and art with his colleagues. Importantly, Ritsert Rinsma's account brings Lesueur out from the shadows of well recognized New Harmony leaders like Owen, Maclure, and Maclure's protégé Madame Marie Duclos Fretageot, who managed the education programs. Lesueur emerges as a major contributor to both utopian New Harmony and the vigorous continuation of its scientific, cultural and educational initiatives until his departure in 1837. He even

participated in a little-known venture to identify a potential geology-related income source for the fledgling communal utopia. Traveling with a team to the banks of the Mississippi near Cairo, Illinois, Lesueur found an abundance of the special white clay needed for the production of fine porcelain that could have become part of the community's economic underpinnings. In Maclure's School of Industry, he taught boys who prepared the plates for Maclure's periodical *The Disseminator of Useful Knowledge* and his book *Opinions on Various Subjects*, as well as the first 9 plates and 26 pages of Lesueur's unfinished *American Ichthyology*.

In the most poignantly descriptive manner to date, Ritsert Rinsma's commentary combined with Lesueur's sketches convey the intricate pattern of circumstances and animosities that regrettably destroyed long-standing personal relationships and, after a brief two-and-a-half years in 1827, New Harmony's utopian experiment itself. Beyond the well-known disagreements of Owen and Maclure, the author ferrets out lesser-known but equally dramatic and divisive conflicts that festered on. Marie Fretageot's role as a capable and assertive woman in an unusual position of authority in early nineteenth-century America has only been completely credited in recent decades. However, she clashed irreparably with community members in carrying out Maclure's instructions every time he left New Harmony. Ritsert Rinsma skillfully exposes the underlying tensions and interprets the emotional and religious overtones of Lesueur's most enigmatic drawings.

Ultimately, Owen, Maclure and Lesueur could not consider their New Harmony experiment a failure. And the author of *Eyewitness to Utopia* is careful not to fall into this all-too-common interpretive trap. In the context of the greater goals for social reform conceived by Owen and Maclure, New Harmony and the 31 other short-lived communal efforts it helped inspire in Canada, England, Ireland, Scotland and the United States can be seen as stepping stones. In a process now known as developmental communalism, Owen's followers from New Harmony and elsewhere went on to



employ other means of organization and activism to further their utopian agenda—lectures, publications, labor unions, producer-consumer cooperatives, and holding public office. As a result, the ongoing Owenite movement to which Lesueur was an eyewitness into the 1830s exercised a profound influence on shaping modern America with emancipation, laborers’ and women’s rights, and free tax-supported public schools, libraries and museums, including the Smithsonian Institution.

By happy coincidence, Lesueur’s fellow Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville took his own investigative tour of the United States in 1831-1832 while Lesueur was still in New Harmony. Tocqueville articulated his astute observations of the country’s social and political institutions and practices in his incisive *Democracy in America* published in 1835. Lesueur made a similar contribution with his incomparable sketches, documenting America’s natural and built environment, its ancient and living wildlife, and the utopian vision of its people. Two centuries later, Ritsert Rinsma’s *Eyewitness to Utopia* presents Lesueur’s artistic gift to the New World in its most complete rendition and elevates this artist, scientist and communitarian to his own proper status among the most notable figures in the early Republic.

Dr. Donald Elden Pitzer

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Author and photographer Ritsert  
Rinsma in front of New Harmony’s  
double log cabin, October 2006

*Photograph by Manon Rinsma*

## FOREWORD BY RALPH G. SCHWARZ

With the foresight and support of Indiana Lieutenant Governor Robert Orr and Indiana University Provost and Lilly Endowment Trustee Dr. Herman Wells and others, during the period between 1972 and 1982, a concerted effort was launched to revive interest in New Harmony, Indiana, the remarkable location of two early nineteenth-century utopian experiments. Historic New Harmony, Inc. was created to help recapture the significance of the early period and, at the same time, attempt to restore and bring renewed vitality to the town, still with a population of only 1,000 residents (its original size). I was elected to serve as president of Historic New Harmony, Inc. during this entire decade, which culminated with the building of the Atheneum (a place of learning), an award-winning icon, designed by Richard Meier. It was set apart on its own podium above the flood plain, challenging and inspiring twenty-first-century scholars. Its simple but architecturally complex interior was also designed to circulate the visitor or student from the reception level up to the observation platform, with its ramp system descending directly into the beautiful historic town. Later Richard Meier was selected to design the world renowned Getty Fine Arts Center in Los Angeles, California, and he invited me to serve as a partner with him during the conceptual and design development phases of the Center.

In 1972 I had been introduced to New Harmony by Helen Duprey Bullock, early archivist of Colonial Williamsburg and pillar of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and her friend Jane Blaffer Owen, wife of New Harmony descendant Kenneth Owen. Jane Owen—personally inspired during extended periods of residency in the community—had been motivated to add in the northern

quarter of the town the celebrated Roofless Church, designed by Philip Johnson. Jane Owen became a close friend of mine. We shared strong beliefs and optimism, together and independently, as we addressed the future of New Harmony.

One of the great satisfactions during the renaissance in New Harmony has been the attraction of many scholars who have been enlightened by the early period of Indiana's and our nation's history. Author Ritsert Rinsma is one of them. As a young graduate student, he became a friend of Jane Owen and her beloved associate Dr. Josephine Elliott, a New Harmony resident, archivist, and author of important related biographical literature pertaining to Charles-Alexandre Lesueur and William Maclure. They offered Ritsert encouragement and support over many years as he researched the art and career of Charles-Alexander Lesueur on both sides of the Atlantic. I, too, have been a long-time friend and colleague of Ritsert during his research and authorship of this important monograph. In addition to New Harmony, our paths crossed in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, where I have been an active preservationist, researcher, and resident periodically since 1949. Ritsert has visited many archives in Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Philadelphia, exploring the fascinating historical links between Indiana and Pennsylvania.

During the early nineteenth century in America, when naturalists accelerated their efforts to describe and publish new findings on the American continent, the scientific world remained, in fact, a network of international scholars. They were eager to communicate. It was essential, as they shared, identified, and named their findings (to avoid duplication). New Harmony's "community of scholars" was

actively involved. Drawings of species by Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, Thomas Say and others were engraved under the supervision of Cornelius Tiebout, the first engraver born in America, and hand colored, under their inspection, by trained local students of New Harmony's School of Industry. Multiple copies were sent to the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, where they were inserted as illustrations and bound into volumes published for distribution to scientists in Europe and America.



The legacy of Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, researched and published by Ritsert Rinsma, reinforced by his friend and collaborator, Jacqueline Bonnemains of the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle du Havre in France, and the input of other dedicated scholars, is now fully documented. Madame Bonnemains was also a friend of mine and New Harmony. She worked tirelessly to preserve the memory of Lesueur and shared her knowledge, gained through the extensive Lesueur collections in her museum, with New Harmony. Charles-Alexandre Lesueur's contribution in natural sciences led him to collect specimens in a wide range of fields—prehistoric artifacts, freshwater mollusks, Native American vegetation and wildlife. Naturalists of Europe and America have united in giving Lesueur the highest praise for his work as painter-naturalist. Quatrefages said his watercolors were “the foremost natural history of ancient or modern times.” Lesueur was the first to study fishes of the Great Lakes of North America. His name will always be associated with the earliest American work on marine invertebrates and invertebrate paleontology. His ability to document faithfully what he observed has provided a remarkable collection of over 1,200 sketches of the American frontier, in many instances the earliest surviving documentation.

In this groundbreaking book, Ritsert Rinsma, with his comprehensive knowledge and acute perceptions, has succeeded masterfully in capturing the significance of Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, illuminating the context of his meaningful American sketchbooks.

Dr. Ralph Grayson Schwarz

Founding President of  
Historic New Harmony, Inc.

Altar and park inside New Harmony's Roofless Church

*Photographs by Ritsert Rinsma*

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

In 1974 Walter B. Hendrickson, author of an important book on geologist David Dale Owen, reviewed an outstanding biography on New Harmony teacher Joseph Neef in the *Indiana Magazine of History*, volume 70, issue 2. It was written by Charles W. Hackensmith and published under the title *Biography of Joseph Neef, Educator in the Ohio Valley, 1809-1854* (New York: Carlton Press, 1973). For the first time since Will Monroe's *History of the Pestalozzian Movement in the United States* (Syracuse, NY: C. W. Bardeen, 1907), a historian presented Neef and his schools after uniting all available published and unpublished materials. He turned these sources into an innovative and comprehensive work that deals with both the historical context and this complex educational figure. Nonetheless, criticism was harsh, for the reviewer wrote:

[...] Neef is a secondary character in the New Harmony saga and even in the history of American education, a full length book is perhaps not called for. [...] [Charles Hackensmith] treats in considerable detail all of the characters in New Harmony [...].

In fact there is so much ancillary material that Neef is lost in the maze. A good many years ago, Richard W. Leopold, himself the author of one of the best books about New Harmony personalities, *Robert Dale Owen*, [...] said that a biographer should never let his typewriter stray from his subject.

Several lessons can be learned from this comment. First of all, never let any reviewer spoil the fun of discovering a lesser-known historical figure. I enjoyed reading Hackensmith's work and believe secondary figures only remain secondary until someone bears witness to their importance. Neef has become the object of many complementary studies since

1974, confirming his status of *premier* avant-garde teacher. Furthermore, when an author needs to widen the scope of his book, he should take care to anticipate criticism by clearly defining a set of goals. If the subject is novel and the scholarship sound, based on contemporary diaries, journals and other first-hand accounts which may reveal new or little-known insights that call for innovative interpretation, then the temptation is strong to provide exhaustive evidence to back up new conclusions. Yet the narrative must remain clear as the author demonstrates his fundamental understanding of the subject without making unnecessary detours. *Eyewitness to Utopia* is no exception, but it was never intended to be just Charles-Alexandre Lesueur's biography. The problem with Lesueur is that he wrote very little about himself. To tell *his* story I needed to contextualize his art and travel to the many places the French explorer once sketched, consulting numerous archives to retrieve essential primary sources.

My original goal was to identify Lesueur's drawings; to try to grasp what the artist saw and why he sketched things, to understand the man through his oeuvre. However, the focus rapidly shifted to science when new elements revealed Lesueur's vital role in Philadelphia and New Harmony. His generous patron was responsible for this rich career, and so William Maclure's part needed to be included in the narrative as well. He influenced Lesueur's philosophy and choices, and he provides the historical context which clarifies the meaning of many of Lesueur's letters and drawings, concurrently adding to our knowledge of the savant but telling another story: the one Lesueur recorded himself in his American sketchbooks from 1816 to 1837. He was an *eyewitness* to the world he lived in. *What he saw* is the main topic of this book, with an emphasis on *Utopia*.

## LIST OF CONSULTED ARCHIVES AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADSM	Archives Départementales de la Seine-Maritime (Rouen, France)	LOC	Library of Congress (Washington, DC)
AMH	Archives Municipales du Havre (France)	MCA	Moravian Church Archives (Bethlehem, PA)
ANSP	Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia (PA), [affiliated with Drexel University since 2011]	MCZ	Museum of Comparative Zoology Archives, Harvard University (Cambridge, MA)
APS	American Philosophical Society (Philadelphia, PA)	MHNH	Muséum d’Histoire Naturelle du Havre (France)
BIF	Bibliothèque de l’Institut de France (Paris, France)	MNHN	Muséum National d’Histoire Naturelle (Paris, France)
BMH	Bibliothèque Municipale du Havre (France)	NCA	National Co-operative Archive, Co-operative College, Holyoake House (Manchester, England)
BNF	Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Paris, France)	NHS	Newport Historical Society Library (RI)
CADN	Centre des Archives Diplomatiques (Nantes, France)	NLT	New Lanark Trust (Scotland)
CHAN	Centre Historique des Archives Nationales (Paris, France)	NNM	Nationaal Natuurhistorisch Museum (Leiden, The Netherlands)
CL	Charles-Alexandre Lesueur Collection	NYPL	New York Public Library (NY)
FHL	Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College (PA)	OEVA	Old Economy Village Archives (Ambridge, PA)
HCLH	Harvard College Libraries, Houghton Library (Cambridge, MA)	OHC	Ohio History Connection (Columbus, OH)
HMLW	Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington (DE)	PCW	People’s Collection Wales (United Kingdom)
HNH	Historic New Harmony Archives (IN)	PWL	Purdue West Lafayette University Libraries (IN)
HSP	Historical Society of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, PA)	QHCL	Quaker Collections Haverford College Libraries (PA)
IHLC	Illinois Historical Survey and Lincoln Room, University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign, IL)	ROM	Robert Owen Museum, Newtown (Wales, UK)
IHS	Indiana Historical Society, William Henry Smith Library (Indianapolis, IN)	SIA	Smithsonian Institution Archives (Washington, DC)
ISMHS	Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites, State Historic Sites Collections (New Harmony, IN)	SHM	Service Historique de la Marine (Cherbourg-Octeville, France)
IULL	Indiana University Lilly Library (Bloomington, IN)	USI	University of Southern Indiana, David L. Rice Library (Evansville, IN)
JAM	Joslyn Art Museum (Omaha, NE)	UVL	University of Virginia Library (Charlottesville, VA)
KDO	Kenneth Dale Owen Collection (New Harmony, IN)	WMI	Working Men’s Institute (New Harmony, IN)
LMDC	Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives, Cornell University (Ithaca, NY)	WYCK	Wyck Historic House Museum, Germantown (Philadelphia, PA)
		YUL	Yale University Library (New Haven, CT)
		ZB	Zentralbibliothek (Zürich, Switzerland)

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thank Dr. Leslie Jean Roberts for the quality of her work.

Recognition for C.-A. Lesueur's scientific contributions—be it in France, Australia, Tasmania, Africa or North-America—is growing steadily, mainly thanks to the hard work of the former curator of the Lesueur Collection of the Natural History Museum in Le Havre, Madame Jacqueline Bonnemains, who spent her entire career organizing, cataloguing and transcribing the immense archive of papers, letters and drawings the naturalist left behind. The catalogues and articles she published from 1978 to 2005 allow researchers to dig deep into the life of this energetic, artistic Frenchman as new light is being shed on his many accomplishments. In September 2009, the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle du Havre published a major compilation of Madame Bonnemains's lifelong efforts in a highly illustrated 400-page album *Charles-Alexandre Lesueur Lesueur: Peintre Voyageur, un Trésor Oublié* (Paris: Editions de Conti, 2009), translated into English under the title *Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, Painter and Naturalist: A Forgotten Treasure* (Paris: MFK Editions, 2016). The publication contains many drawings and watercolors from different periods of Lesueur's existence, accompanied by the precise transcriptions and scientific identifications found in Jacqueline Bonnemains's catalogues. Curiously, Madame Bonnemains is not mentioned as a co-author, and no foot- or endnote hints to her preparatory work, even though it makes up 70% of the book. Moreover, this otherwise valuable compilation of Lesueur's art includes introductory sections (for each period) which undermine Jacqueline Bonnemains's lifelong work with factual and historical errors. To mention just a few: the French edition attributes Lesueur's portrait to V. Gribayedoff instead of Charles Willson Peale; the portrait of Lesueur's grandmother is mistaken for that of his mother; Lesueur's bust is wrongly attributed to “Madame Mezzara” and not to her son Joseph Ernest Amédée Mezzara (1820-1901); two drawings by painter Louis Lesueur (1746-1803) are reproduced (CL 46 260, 46 263, MHNH) and presented as artwork by C.-A. Lesueur; technical terms like “steamboat,” “flatboat” and “keelboat” are mixed up, and many dates and

place names are approximate or erroneous. Few other sources than Jacqueline Bonnemains's catalogues and publications seem to have been consulted, yet the former curator's name is missing, except in the preface by the mayor of Le Havre (removed from the international edition) and in the book's bibliography, which refers to five minor contributions. None of these issues have been addressed in the album's English translation, apart from Lesueur's portrait, which is now *almost* correctly attributed to “Charles Wilson [sic] Peale.”

The present work on Lesueur's American sketchbooks took about sixteen years to write, a full chapter of my life and a task I could not have accomplished without the precious aid of the dedicated Jacqueline Bonnemains (and the many persons listed above), not to mention my loving wife Elisabeth, my children Liza, Rohan and Sander, and my little sister Manon, who patiently shared me with Lesueur. Moreover, I shall always be grateful to the late Jane Blaffer Owen, who first introduced me to her husband Kenneth Dale Owen in the summer of 2001, and who passed away nine years after the beginning of our friendship on June 21, 2010. I am thankful for the volcano Eyjafjallajökull in Iceland, which prolonged my stay in Houston and New Harmony that year, for it allowed me, one last time, to fully appreciate her enthusiasm, devotion and warmth. Mrs. Owen's grandson, Erik Arneberg, finally succeeded in teaching me how to pronounce the name of that ill-famed, but helpful, volcano. Dear Erik, Ingrid, Jamie and Abigail, it is to your grandmother that I dedicate this book and also to her much beloved friend, the indefatigable Josephine Mirabella Elliott, archivist emerita, who died in New Harmony the same day as your grandfather. Mrs. Elliott's work and method were an inspiration to us all. She showed me the way in the labyrinth of American archives. When Josephine received me at her home, day after day during that first summer of 2001 in New Harmony, I found the resolve and methodological means to bring this mission to a successful end.

Ritsert Rinsma





# Introduction



Marching field where General Harrison gathered his troops in 1811 for the Battle of Tippecanoe – by C.-A. Lesueur, June 1834 (CL 41 182). From left to right: the new courthouse with its steeple (1830-1874); Vincennes University with its cupola (1811-1886); three houses belonging to Leonard Ackley; the fenced university grounds; the Presbyterian church on Buntin Street; the Main Street area and St. Francis Xavier Cathedral with its high belfry; Buntin and Fourth Streets with the old courthouse and Knox County jail logcabin (between the two intersections); Buntin and Third Streets with the Methodist church on the left corner; David Bonner’s steam mill (chimney) and the cotton factory on Barnet Street between Third and Second Streets. Identification by Richard Day.

*Courtesy of the Natural History Museum in Le Havre*

For many Europeans, the name Indiana still evokes a certain exoticism. This American state—about two hundred and forty miles long and one hundred and fifty miles wide—is bounded by Michigan and its lake to the north, Kentucky and the Ohio River to the south, the state of Ohio to the east, and Illinois and the Wabash River to the west. In 1800, however, Indiana was not yet a state but part of the Indiana Territory, which included the region north of the Ohio River up to the Canadian frontier; the present states of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois and Indiana. To the west, the Mississippi marked the border between American and French possessions. Here one entered that immense region—stretching from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico—which, in 1682, had been named Louisiana by French explorer Robert-René Cavelier de La Salle, in honor of Louis XIV.<sup>1</sup> In 1803 Napoleon Bonaparte sold this vast colonial province to Thomas Jefferson's America. Before long, the area became the states of Louisiana (1812), Missouri (1821) and Arkansas (1836), as well as the territories of Minnesota (1849), Kansas (1854), Nebraska (1861), Dakota (1863) and Montana (1864). The newly organized Louisiana Territory bordered the Indiana Territory from 1805 to 1812, before giving its name to the rather small southern state at the mouth of the Mississippi. In 1816 the state of Indiana joined the Union, followed by its neighbor Illinois in 1818. The remainder of the former Indiana Territory had become the Michigan Territory in 1805. In 1830, however, the states of Indiana, Illinois, Missouri and Louisiana were still part of the American frontier.<sup>2</sup>

Until the end of the eighteenth century, the region that stretches from the Ohio to the northern Great Lakes was inhabited mainly by tribes of Algonquian Indians, the most significant being the Shawnee, Illinois and Miami. French explorers Jacques Marquette (1637-1675), Louis Jolliet (1645-1700) and René-Robert Cavelier de la Salle (1643-1687) were among the first Europeans to come into contact with these tribes in their home territory. After many voyages

of discovery between 1673 and 1687, a growing number of trappers followed in their footsteps, enriching Quebec trading markets with furs and pelts of all kinds.<sup>3</sup> As a result, toward 1731 François-Marie Bissot (better known as François Margane, lord of Vincennes, 1700-1736) commissioned a military fort to be built on the east bank of the Wabash. A few years later, this fort became the center of the first village of non-native Americans in Indiana. Under the directive of governor William Henry Harrison (1773-1841), future president of the United States, Vincennes became the official capital of the Indiana Territory from 1800 to 1813. Harrison put an end to the territorial aspirations of the native population by sending in troops to destroy their villages. He supervised the infamous Battle of Tippecanoe in November 1811 and two years later was responsible for the death of the last great Shawnee chief, Tecumseh (c. 1768-1813).<sup>4</sup> It was during this time of war against Native Americans of the Indiana Territory that German spiritual leader George Rapp decided to build New Harmony. The Harmonists created their new community, starting in 1814, on the east bank of the Wabash River, fifty miles south of Vincennes and fifteen miles north of the confluence of the Wabash and Ohio Rivers. In 1825 Father Rapp sold the entire town to a utopian philosopher: the philanthropist and social reformer Robert Owen.

Charles-Alexandre Lesueur arrived at New Harmony for the first time in January 1826. Approaching from the southern hills and seeing a lush valley in the midst of thick forest with the silver arms of the Wabash River cutting through it, set against the backdrop of the wide prairies of Illinois, he must have felt like Moses at the gates of the Promised Land.<sup>5</sup> In winter, of course, the site would not have looked as magical, but in the spring's first strong suns, with nature awakening and the fireflies lighting the earth like stars in the sky, the traveler was transported to a new realm. The forest and its animals—deer, beaver, bear, wolves, hares, wild cats, squirrels and snakes—suddenly came alive. In the

air and on the ground one could hear the calls of so many birds: wild turkeys, parakeets, woodpeckers, nuthatches, crested cardinals and chickadees. Abundant trees and vines produced flowers and buds that decorated branch and soil: gum trees, plane trees, cypress, apple trees, maples and thick vines. Countless big trees, many taller than sixty-five feet and wider than a yard, provided shade in all seasons: oak, beech, ash and a great variety of nut trees.<sup>6</sup> The richness of flora and fauna filled Lesueur's heart with joy. Here was a paradisiacal garden, an Eden in Indiana.

Indiana's principal river became a major source of inspiration and investigation for the naturalist Lesueur. The Wabash receives the flowing waters of the White River and Tippecanoe, and it is about five hundred miles long. Unfortunately, intense agriculture and excessive deforestation of its banks have given today's Wabash a muddy, brownish color. It is a far cry from the river the Miami once called Wah-bah-shik-ki or Wah-pah-shik-ki, meaning "pure white," "natural" or "bright." In the days of Lesueur, the water was so transparent that its bed of limestone schist and small white pebbles, clearly visible, made it look like a shining pearl of incomparable perfection.<sup>7</sup> In contemporary accounts, many travelers describe the Wabash as a "very beautiful river,"<sup>8</sup> full of life. The first French explorers, who had come down from Canada, spelled the Algonquian name "Oua-bache," while also using "Belle Rivière" (a name which later came to refer to the lower course of the Ohio because it was then supposed that the Ohio flowed into the Wabash).<sup>9</sup>

The history of the region, its links with French culture, the purity of the Wabash valley, and the richness of its flora and fauna made this part of America infinitely attractive to Lesueur. His future duties and obligations to the utopian community were not by any means his only reason for staying there. Robert Owen had bought a tiny, isolated island of civilization—the equivalent of a futurist lunar base—in the midst of a wilderness, completely unexplored by science. Moreover, Lesueur's patron William Maclure would bring in all the necessary tools to identify and publish data about

objects of natural history. To make new discoveries, Lesueur only had to walk a few steps. What more could he ask for? Do not all scientists dream of working in such a perfect environment?

Surprisingly, few historians seem to appreciate the full import of Lesueur's stay in New Harmony. The following acerbic remark by his biographer Ernest Hamy—first published in 1904 in his book *The Travels of the Naturalist Charles A. Lesueur in North America*—perfectly sums up the negative point of view that has been generally adopted on this subject:<sup>10</sup>

Lesueur had no word of sympathy for the fall of the communistic enterprise of which he was an apathetic witness. He lived in the midst of the new society without participating in and without particularly following its practices. [...] [Lesueur] never showed the least interest in the dreams of New Harmony. [...] He submitted to some of the rules of the society in whose service Maclure urged him to enter. He surveyed, drew and collected for it [...]. But there his effective participation ended.<sup>11</sup>

Hamy based his strong opinions on what he had gleaned from George Ord's "Memoir of Charles Alexander [*sic*] Lesueur," read to the members of the American Philosophical Society on April 6, 1849. Yet it is important to note that the words of this friend of Lesueur cannot be considered trustworthy, for Ord had a very low opinion of Owen's doctrines and disapproved of the utopian experiment in which Lesueur had taken part. In October 1845 Ord wrote to Lesueur:

There is a reunion of savants in New York, by and by. It is a matter of a cure for all evils, a universal reform. When I tell you that the fanatic Robert Owen is at the head of this assembly of asses, you will be disposed to believe that there are no longer houses for the insane among us.<sup>12</sup>

Ord's point of view is biased, but this book will establish the precise reasons which induced the French naturalist and artist to depart for New Harmony.

# 2

## Lesueur and Maclure's Travels in the Northeast



Road to Albany at sunset  
– by C.-A. Lesueur,  
[April] 1819 (CL 39 179)

*Courtesy of the Natural  
History Museum in Le Havre*



C.-A. Lesueur's  
North American travels

Between 1815 and 1831, Charles-Alexandre Lesueur's projects were an integral part of the educational framework defined by William Maclure:

All ideas are only images in the Mind, and it is a difficult task to form these images by a discription [*sic*] of words, however perfect. [...]. I therefore think teachers [...] cannot have too many prints [...]. Such as all the antiquities in the United States—ornaments of architecture and handsome buildings; the greatest part of Natural History such as animals, plants && [...] landscapes, pleasant and usefull [*sic*] representations [...].<sup>1</sup>

Studying social experiments and collecting views of antiquities and important historical places in America were as much a part of their educational mission as the observation of nature. Every animal drawn by Lesueur became a cognitive tool for Maclure. Inspecting communal villages, such as those of the Shakers and the Moravians, allowed the travelers to meet inspiring people who often proposed alternatives to traditional teaching. This did not stop Maclure from being skeptical about some of the congregations from which these initiatives originated. The negative publicity surrounding Joseph Neef's school, the hostility toward similar projects in France and Spain, "the obstinacy of schoolmasters, the ignorance of parents and the intolerant bigotry of priestcraft"<sup>2</sup> frustrated Maclure and eventually led him to rally to Owen's cause.

### Maclure and Lesueur: Precursors of Uniformitarianism

William Maclure was not a religious man but an activist for workers' rights, an inheritor of the Jeffersonian ideal, and a promoter of useful knowledge. Maclure considered himself to be a son of the Enlightenment just like Lesueur, who participated in his effort, learned from him, and made his own contributions in a time steeped in the ideas

of Thomas Jefferson and his quest for utilitarian data. In addition, Maclure and Lesueur undertook their "grand tour" through the northeastern United States as part of the new wave of scientific exploration also initiated by Jefferson. They did not, however, travel west of the Eightieth Meridian (which crosses the towns of Pittsburgh and Erie) and did not go further south than the Thirty-Ninth Parallel (near Baltimore).

During their expeditions, Lesueur's work consisted of collecting geological data by making sketches of stratifications and gathering rock samples. Paleontological studies were part of the focus<sup>3</sup> because the presence of marine fossils on high ground allowed them to determine the sedimentary origin of certain strata, and to distinguish between Primitive, Transitional and Secondary. These scientific terms are no longer in use but they correspond to Abraham Gottlob Werner's (1749-1817) classification that Maclure chose to employ. Like his German colleague, Maclure differentiated five geological layers during his fieldtrips with Lesueur, making a distinction between "Primitive Rock" (which corresponds to the Precambrian and other crystalline rocks of the Adirondack Mountains, New England and the Piedmont Province), "Transitional Rock" (the folded Paleozoic of the Appalachians), "Secondary Rock" (the flat-lying Paleozoic further west), the "*Floetz*" or "Old Red Sandstone" (the Triassic Newark group), and "Alluvial Rocks" (the Cretaceous and Tertiary deposits of the Coast Plain).<sup>4</sup> Maclure was a pragmatist who based his conclusions on observation rather than theory.<sup>5</sup> His personal journals suggest he was a precursor of uniformitarianism like Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744-1829), who theorized that the earth must be much older than it was thought to be in his era.<sup>6</sup> In 1811 Maclure was already writing in his journal:

[I] have allways [*sic*] thought that the Changes on our Globe depend more on the coincidence of a great many partial causes and Changes [rather] than on any great

sweeping Agent which should have wrought up the whole in 7 days as Moses made the creation. But Moses has many imitators: all the theories of the Earth yet published begin by a creation which is effectuated all at once by some great Agent [such] as a comet, the sun, fire, water &&c. No part of the Globe has been supposed [to be] eternal. The earth itself must after Moses be made by some materials brought from other planets without inquiring how or when those planets were made. There appears to me no absurdity in supposing that the Earth is as eternal as the other planets and stars; the Origin of which we shall most probably find it difficult to explain.<sup>7</sup>

Maclure was very much ahead of his time, and it comes as no surprise that he and Lesueur, both forerunners of modern geology and paleontology, were perfectly aware that by correlating their knowledge of biology with the geological record, they could analyze the earth's crust with more precision. Fossils, which were by then largely recognized as organic remains, became the key for interpreting the geological register, particularly after Georges Cuvier (1769-1832) and his assistant Alexandre Brongniart (1770-1847) explored the Paris Basin at the beginning of the 1800s. Cuvier, who became the international expert in comparative anatomy, demonstrated the structural differences between fossils and existing animals, which led to an awareness of the great age of the strata.<sup>8</sup> In the Primitive there were no traces of fossils; the Transitional could have some, but only sightless animals and the first forms of vegetation such as ferns. The Secondary, on the other hand, sometimes contained fossils of seeing animals and woody plants.<sup>9</sup>

This biostratigraphic distinction does not clearly appear in the publications of Maclure, who seems to prefer a lithostratigraphic division. Lesueur's comments, however, indicate that in fact he and Maclure were following the same paleontological principles as Cuvier and Brongniart. Charles-Alexandre Lesueur's extensive knowledge of plants and animals living on the earth's surface and in the deep

oceans enabled him to identify fossil remains with great precision—something very few mineralogists were capable of doing. Lesueur was a great zoologist, ornithologist, entomologist, conchologist, ichthyologist, and even botanist. His contributions to Maclure's geological investigations and American paleontology should not be underestimated. This is illustrated by Lesueur's encounter, in 1819, with the American geologist Amos Eaton in Albany, New York.<sup>10</sup> About this chapter of Lesueur's life, historian John M. Clarke wrote in 1921:

Lesueur was a student of Cuvier, and I think New York Paleontology may now confess the measure of its debt to him. Early in 1820 [*sic*] Lesueur visited Albany at the request of the State Boundary Commission and here he was quickly found by Eaton, then lecturing at the Troy Lyceum. Forthwith he was whisked off, as opportunity presented, into the Helderbergs whose teeming fossils were lying nameless. There [Lesueur's] Cuvierian eyes and his Cuvierian training helped Eaton, the Yankee geologist, to [give] Cuvierian names, the first these fossils ever had.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to being an excellent geologist and paleontologist, Lesueur was an experienced land surveyor. Trained as a cartographer at the Le Havre School of Mathematics and Hydrography, he drew the first map of Sydney, Australia, in 1802.<sup>12</sup> After his return from the Baudin expedition in 1804, Lesueur became Cuvier's student in Paris. Cuvier established that the most reliable way to differentiate strata was to identify key fossils. He was the first to demonstrate that extinct animals could be reconstructed from fragmentary remains according to consistent anatomical principles. This allowed him to recreate long-gone hippopotamuses, rhinoceroses, cave bears, mas-todons, crocodiles and tigers.<sup>13</sup> An interesting example of Lesueur's exceptional Cuvierian abilities can be found in Amos Eaton's 1824 book *A Geological and Agricultural Survey of the District Adjoining the Erie Canal*, where we read about the pyritiferous rock at the head of Cayuga Lake:



I have seen in this rock encrinites, entrochites, anthocephalites, chamites, gryphites, terebratulites, orthocerites, volutites, turbinites, common madreporites, retiporites, horn-form madreporites, favosites, isidites, alcyonites; all of which were labeled at my request by Le Sueur.<sup>14</sup>

In 1819 Lesueur's technical skills brought him back to the frontier between Canada and the United States, having been commissioned by the American government to establish the

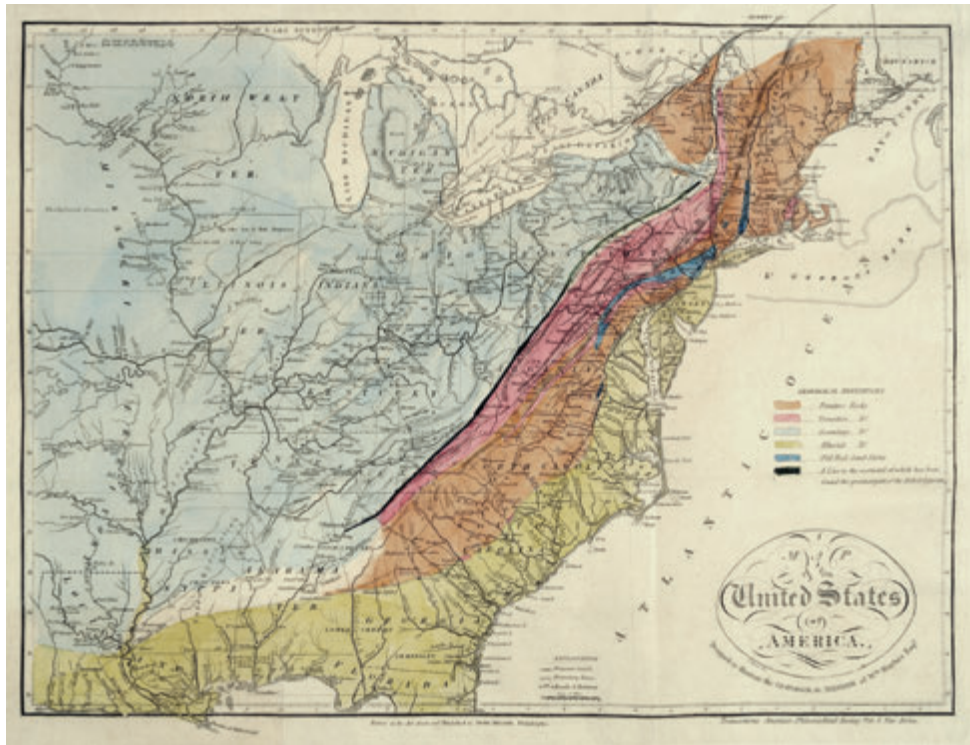
dividing line between the two countries. This allowed him to meet geologist Amos Eaton, the protégé of Stephen Van Rensselaer. As a result, not only did Lesueur help to define the territory of the United States, but he also made major contributions to institutions like the Albany Academy and the Rensselaer School in Troy, which in 1861 became the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.<sup>15</sup>

### First Evidence of an Interest in Utopian Societies

Whether from the first part of his trip through the northeastern United States or the rest of the grand tour, Lesueur's manuscripts and drawings describe in a realistic manner the landscapes, villages and cities he passed through in company of Maclure. It is important to note, however, that Maclure's journal, on at least two occasions, provides evidence of an ideology behind their itinerary. At the end of June 1816, after visiting the Pittsburgh coal mines, the explorers went down the upper Ohio in a keelboat, apparently as far as Rochester in Beaver County.<sup>16</sup> From there, they continued by land for about fifteen miles in a northeastern direction and then halted to make their first utopian visit.<sup>17</sup> William Maclure wrote on a separate page of his geological diary:

This place was settled about 11 years ago by a number of Germans brought from some part of Germany by a priest of the name of Rap[p]. He had sufficient influence with them to make them all put their property into a joint purse and give him the management of it. They bought 9,000 acres of land and made great improvements, woolen manufacturing mills, distilleries &&& and a town with upward 15 or 20 good brick houses, a church, Granary && and several out villages.<sup>18</sup>

Maclure and Lesueur had arrived in Harmony, Butler County, located about thirty miles north of Pittsburgh. As

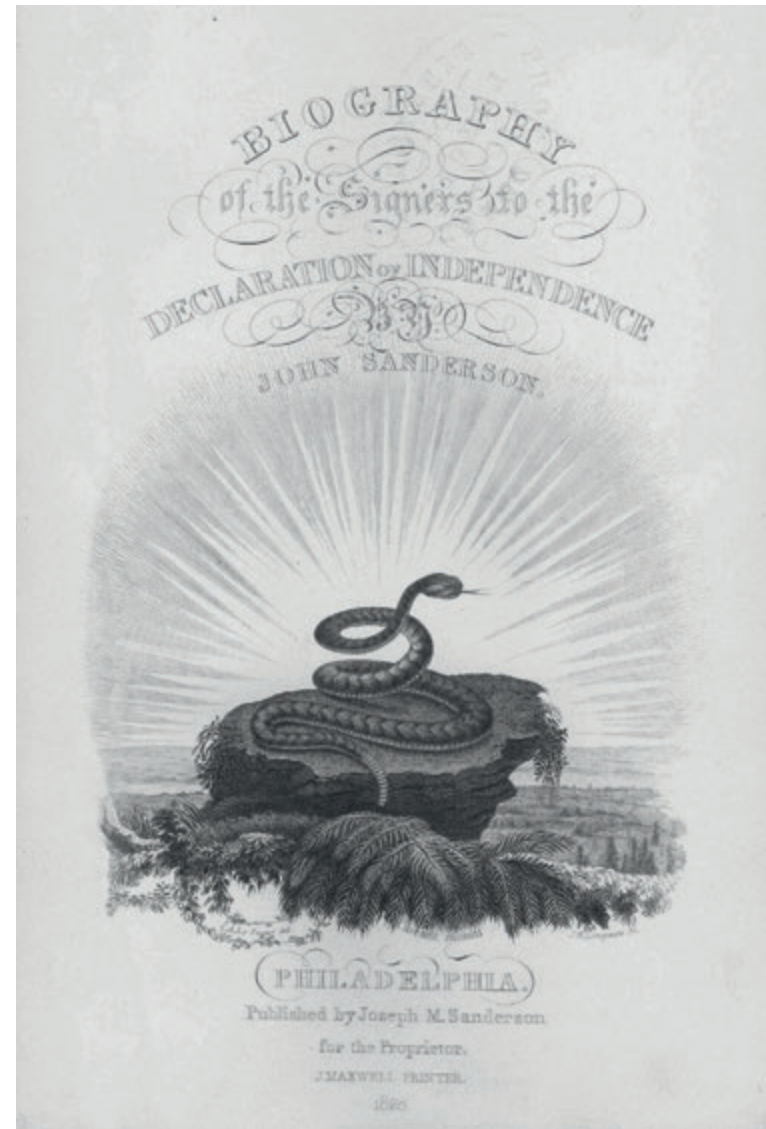


Map of the United States of America—with boundary lines, roads, distances and proposed canals—designed to illustrate the geological memoir of William Maclure. Published by John Melish, Philadelphia.

*Courtesy of the Working Men's Institute in New Harmony*

French naturalist and artist. Lesueur was asked to copy two heads with antlers Jefferson had found in Kentucky. These drawings were used to illustrate Caspar Wistar's article "An Account of Two Heads Found in the Morass, Called the Big Bone Lick, and Presented to the Society by Mr. Jefferson."<sup>10</sup> Lesueur knew Jefferson well, and showed a particular interest in the former president's career. An example of this is the detailed watercolor of an opened window overlooking Market (or High) Street, showing the intersection with Sixth Street. Lesueur himself lived on Eighth Street, southwest of Market Street in 1825. After some research, it appeared that the drawing was made from Jacob Graff's house, located on Seventh Street between Market and Chestnut Streets, the very place where Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence in June 1776. The picture also includes a chair and (hardly visible) portable desk on a low table, still present in the room. When Lesueur was asked, in 1820, to illustrate the title page of John Sanderson's *Biography of the Signers to the Declaration of Independence* (9 vols.), he chose to represent a rattlesnake, for he considered this animal to be one of the most amazing things he had seen in the United States.<sup>11</sup> Under the engraving he added the following inscription in Latin: "Caveant moniti," which means "Visionaries beware." With this word of caution he reminded the American leaders that the English threat was still very real and that they were to remain as vigilant as a snake to safeguard the future of their young republic.

In July 1801 William Maclure sent Thomas Jefferson a long letter summarizing the political and economic situation in France and reporting on his trips in countries of Northern and Western Europe. Maclure took this opportunity to give Jefferson a copy of the *Napoleonic Code*, while expressing his confidence in the new president who would bring "happiness and prosperity" to the United States, as well as "progress of civilization and Knowledge in every part of the Globe."<sup>12</sup> Jefferson had met the young Maclure around 1783 in Richmond, Virginia, where Maclure worked for Patrick Hart.<sup>13</sup> In 1799 the future president of the United States



C.-A. Lesueur's title page for the first four volumes of John Sanderson's *Biography of the Signers to the Declaration of Independence*, published in Philadelphia between 1820 and 1827.

*Courtesy of the Providence Public Library on Rhode Island*

apparently proposed Maclure's nomination as a member of the American Philosophical Society, three years after the Scottish merchant had become a naturalized U.S. citizen in Detroit. Maclure's mandate as a government representative ended in December 1804,<sup>14</sup> but for many years afterwards he considered it a point of honor to inform Thomas Jefferson about anything that might be of interest to him. Jefferson, on the other hand, valued Maclure's friendship and counsel, which we can appreciate thanks to a note he mailed him in November 1817:

I thank you, dear Sir, for the copy of your *Geology of the US*, which you have been so kind as to send me. [...]

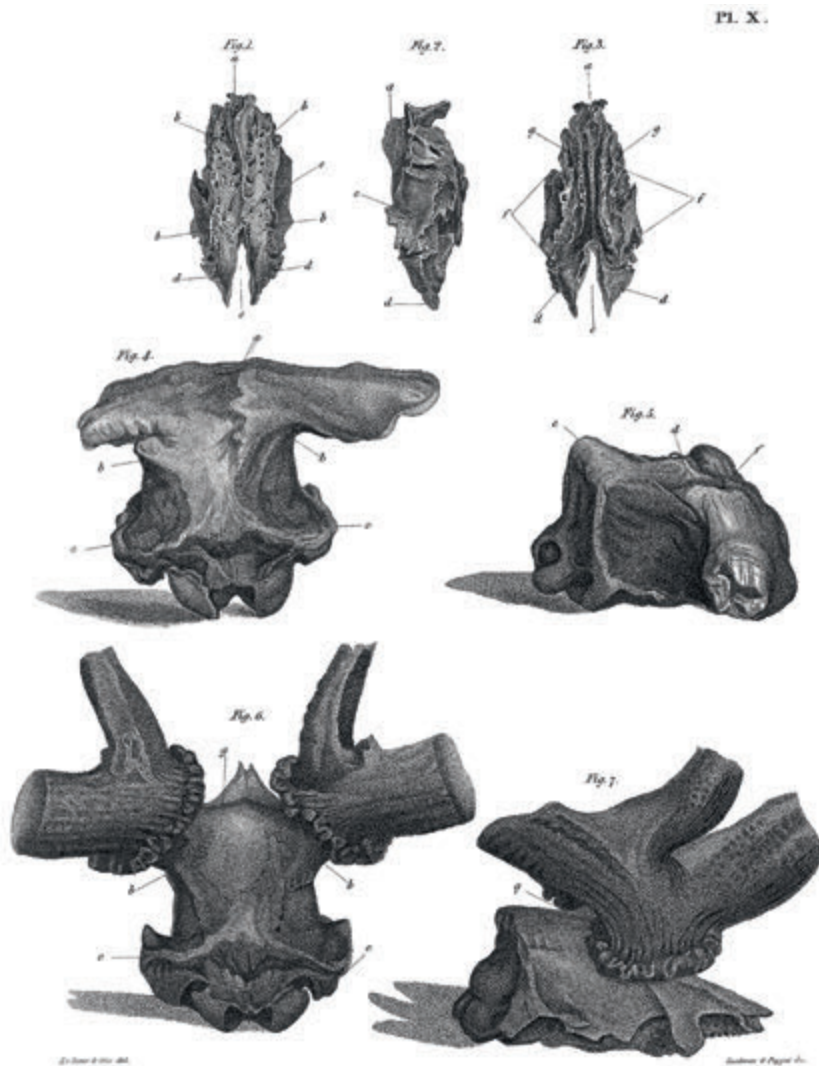
I recall to mind with fondness the pleasure I received from your society in Philadelphia, with Volney, Niemsewicz [*sic*], Latrobe & others. [...] I am not without a hope that a literary establishment we are making near Charlottesville may become considerable enough to attract your summer peregrinations towards it sometimes. [...] Should this or any other circumstance invite you again to our neighborhood I shall fondly hope you will make Monticello your head quarters, and that in the mean time you will be assured of my sincere attachment & respect.<sup>15</sup>

Jefferson kept up a worldwide correspondence, obtaining first-hand information about the advancement of the sciences and arts, as well as on national and international issues.<sup>16</sup> In 1792, seventeen years before Maclure published his first geological map,<sup>17</sup> Jefferson asked the American Philosophical Society to find competent men to travel up the Missouri to its source, to cross the Rocky Mountains, and to go as far as the Pacific Ocean, in order to study the geographical and geological characteristics of the North American continent. Captain Meriwether Lewis, stationed in Charlottesville at that time, volunteered for the task, ready to take along the famous French botanist André Michaux (1746-1802). Surprisingly, according to a report by Jefferson, the Minister Plenipotentiary from France, then at Philadelphia, sent a special envoy to remind Michaux of his obligations to his

fatherland. As a consequence, the expedition had to be called off although its members were already in Kentucky. In 1803 the American president decided to revive the mission after the acquisition of colonial French Louisiana. Lewis, who had now been Jefferson's private secretary for almost two years, set off to Philadelphia to enrich his knowledge of the natural sciences. Benjamin Barton, Caspar Wistar and Benjamin Rush instructed him in botany, zoology, ethnology and Native American linguistics; Robert Patterson and Andrew Ellicott taught him how to make astronomical observations. Lewis expended five hundred dollars to organize the trip, and Lieutenant Clark was recruited as his second in command.<sup>18</sup>

Lesueur's oeuvre has many connections to the Lewis and Clark expedition. It is therefore important to give this voyage of discovery a closer look. Not only was it organized less than two months after the Louisiana Purchase, in which William Maclure played a diplomatic role, but it provided a large number of natural history objects to the American scientists who were collaborating with Lesueur. Throughout his stay in Philadelphia, the French naturalist worked with the fruits of the expedition. Moreover, from December 1825 to May 1826, he would retrace some of the path of Lewis and Clark, going to several regions they had crossed. Lesueur traveled no further than St. Louis, the first step of their journey, but he nonetheless immortalized the very landscapes the famous explorers saw from July to December 1803. Lesueur quite probably met William Clark in Philadelphia before 1825, and he may have visited his museum of Native American artifacts in St. Louis between 1826 and 1830.<sup>19</sup> Lesueur showed much interest in the recent history of American Indians, and in 1819 he tried to join Major Stephen Harriman Long's scientific mission, which was organized along the same principles as the voyage of Lewis and Clark.

At the time of the Lewis and Clark expedition, American flora and fauna west of the Mississippi were virtually unknown, and the opportunities to learn about them still rare. It is, however, regrettable that the party did not include any methodical zoologist; scientists like François Péron and



Skulls and horns of deer found by Thomas Jefferson and drawn by Charles-Alexandre Lesueur and Bass Otis. This plate was published in the *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, n.s., 1 (1818): 380 bis.

Courtesy of the Brown University Library on Rhode Island

Lesueur, who had collected, organized and named most of the new species discovered during their Voyage to the Southern Lands.<sup>20</sup> Because of this, the final report of the American expedition contained only the descriptions of animals that had caught their attention. Nonetheless, the specimens brought back to Philadelphia and exhibited in the museum of Charles Willson Peale attracted much interest. Peale stuffed them and Lewis entrusted part of their study to the Scottish ornithologist Alexander Wilson, who was then writing his book on the birds of North America. The zoological samples that were preserved in Peale's museum in Philadelphia contributed to the publishing of major American scientific works.<sup>21</sup> The first to come out was Alexander Wilson's famous *American Ornithology*, followed in 1825 by Richard Harlan's *Fauna Americana*.

In the next few years, John Godman published his three tomes of *American Natural History*, for which Lesueur provided most illustrations.<sup>22</sup> His collaboration with Godman was fruitful, and in 1824 Lesueur also contributed to medical works such as *Anatomical Investigations* and *Morbid Anatomy*.<sup>23</sup> In one of the sections of this last publication, Godman declared: "I had a drawing made [...] by Mr. C. A. LESUEUR, whose name is synonymous with TRUTH in all that pertains to graphic delineation [...]."<sup>24</sup> In his 1895 biography on Lesueur, published in *Popular Science Monthly*, Dr. David Starr Jordan, president of the Leland Stanford Junior University and cofounder of the Indiana Academy of Sciences, repeated Godman's assessment of Lesueur's graphic talents:

His scientific work was done chiefly in America, and it ranked with the best of its kind at the time. [...] His descriptions are clear, exact and honest. His drawings are not accurate only, but spirited. They are works of art rather than mechanical representations. [...] Lesueur had, what Rafinesque had not, sound sense and faithfulness in the study of details. In America he was perhaps the first of that school of systematic zoology which regards

new materials and initiate the greatest number of students to a sensorial apprenticeship, i.e. learning through the senses by experiencing concrete objects.<sup>51</sup> About the involvement of the members of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, Lesueur wrote to Maclure:

R. Haines has just set up a school in Germantown where Dr. Wistar is teaching Mineralogy. He would like to have or to borrow your telescope and an electric machine. [...] Dr. Troost is going to give a course on Mineralogy, and I am sure it will be a good stimulus for the members of the Society and will inspire them to further study. As for me, all my time is taken up at present. I teach at the following boarding houses: of Mesdames Grelaud, Grimshaw, Cygogne [*sic*], I. Juggs [*sic*: Hughes]; and at the homes of Mead, Meridith [*sic*], Heyre [*sic*], Isard [*sic*] & I spend Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, after dinner, on the minerals.<sup>52</sup>

To his friend Anselme Desmarest, Lesueur wrote:

In the mean time I carry on with my students, who keep me busy from morning 'til evening, for I enjoy a good reputation in town. I have the best and most respectable homes of Philadelphia, and very pretty pupils.<sup>53</sup>

Lesueur's most famous pupils, to whom he taught natural history and drawing, were Joseph Bonaparte's daughters, Princesses Zénaïde and Charlotte, who lived at Point Breeze near Bordentown (New Jersey), twenty-five miles northeast of Philadelphia. Point Breeze was a cultural and artistic meeting point, and Lesueur's relationship with the Bonaparte family seems to have been quite congenial.<sup>54</sup> Other well-known pupils of Lesueur were the Du Pont de Nemours children, who later ran the firm E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company. At the beginning of the twentieth century, DuPont would evolve into the second-largest chemical enterprise in the world (behind the German firm BASF),



Garden and manor of Joseph Bonaparte at Point Breeze  
– by C.-A. Lesueur, [c. 1821] (CL 40 105)

*Courtesy of the Natural History Museum in Le Havre*



Column with capital and Henry du Pont's rocking horse  
*Courtesy of the Hagley Museum and Library in Wilmington*



developing revolutionary synthetic products like neoprene, nylon, Teflon and Kevlar. A short humorous note, written in 1822, bears witness to the playful interaction between Lesueur and his pupils north of Wilmington, Delaware:

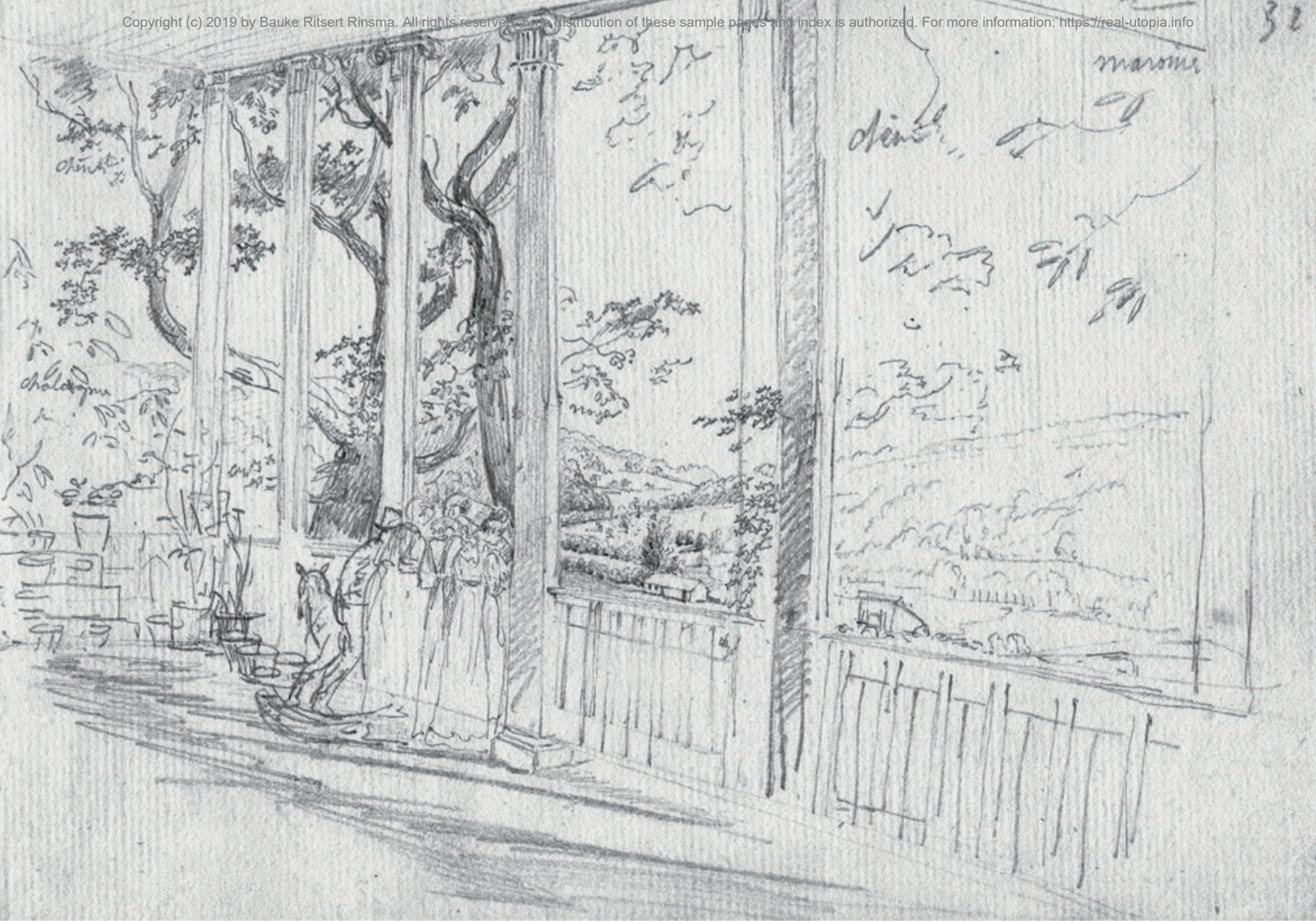
Be it known to all whom it may concern that the Ladies of Brandywine have detained M<sup>r</sup> Le Sueur by main force this day the Second of September in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and twenty-two. In witness whereof they here unto affix their names.

Eleutherian Mills – Kentmere – Louviers: V[ictorine] E[lizabeth] Bauduy, Sarah L[ydia] Gilpin, S[arah] E[mlen] Hare, E[lizabeth] Gilpin, Julia S[ophie] du Pont, Eleuthera du Pont<sup>55</sup>

Lesueur instructed his pupils in natural history and drawing, using the methods of a professionally trained teacher. This is obvious when we study the private collection of the late Kenneth Dale Owen in New Harmony. It contains sketches and watercolors by Robert Owen's sons and several other students of the French naturalist. About his lessons with Lesueur, Richard Owen wrote in a letter dated December 14, 1886:

He was a magnificent artist, good alike in drawing and coloring. I have some of his sketches yet, in which, when I was taking drawing lessons from him, he showed me how to outline, for instance, the skeleton of the human figure, then to add the muscular system, then the clothing, drapery, etc. We usually took views from Nature. Although so minute in details of fine paintings, he was equally good in large scenery. For many years we had here the scenes he painted for a Thespian Society of this place, where, amid the forest trees, he had squirrels, birds, etc.<sup>56</sup>

Lesueur had his pupils analyze color, shadow, depth and perspective, teaching them how to draw skulls, skeletons, architectural ornaments, buildings and landscapes. This enables us to understand the manner in which he organized



View on the Brandywine Valley from the piazza of Eleuthère Irénée du Pont – by C.-A. Lesueur, [September 2, 1822] (CL 39 166)

Esquisses & Croquis des lieux où  
nous avons passé depuis le départ de  
Philadelphie à Pittsburg & de Pittsburg  
à New Harmony pendant notre navigation  
à bord du Keelboat en descendant l'Ohio  
depuis le 27 novembre 1825 jusqu'au 25<sup>Jan</sup> 1826



“Sketches and drawings of the places we passed through since the departure from Philadelphia to Pittsburg[h] & from Pittsburg[h] to New Harmony during our navigation on board the keelboat going down the Ohio, from November 27, 1825, till J[anuar]y 25, 1826.” Translated from page 1 of C.-A. Lesueur’s sketchbook (CL 41 000).

Courtesy of the Natural History Museum in Le Havre



The last days in Philadelphia were spent packing an immense quantity of material, particularly the private collections and books of Lesueur, Say and Maclure, stored on the ground floor of the Academy of Natural Sciences. The boxes were sent to New Orleans with the rest of the baggage to be taken by steamboat to Shawneetown near New Harmony.<sup>1</sup> On Sunday morning, November 27, 1825, Charles-Alexandre Lesueur left Philadelphia in a convoy of wagons and carriages en route to Pittsburgh.<sup>2</sup> William Maclure, Marie Fretageot, Guillaume Phiquepal, Thomas Say, William Price and many others made the trip with him. Madame Fretageot traveled with her assistants, Lucy Sistare and Virginia Dupalais. Virginia was accompanied by her brothers André and Victor, and Lucy by her sisters Frances and Sarah. There were quite a few other children in the group, such as doctor Price's three daughters, carpenter John Beal's daughter, and Phiquepal's pupils from Paris and Philadelphia: Alexis Alphonse, Amélie Dufour, Charles Falque, Achille Fretageot, Pierre Duclos, Victor Duclos, Edmund Morris and Thomas Riley.<sup>3</sup>

### **C.-A. Lesueur: Father of a Small Family**

The presence of one particular passenger, three-year-old Cecilia Noël, has given rise to speculation. In 1938 historian Robert Vail also mentioned her in his Lesueur biography, stating the little girl was under the Frenchman's care:<sup>4</sup>

Another member of the family was Cecilia Noël whose feverstricken parents in Santo-Domingo had entrusted her to the kind-hearted Lesueur who brought her to New Harmony where she afterwards married Achille Emery Fretageot, son of Madame Fretageot.<sup>5</sup>

Where Robert Vail obtained this information is a mystery. No other historical document mentions this supposed good

deed of Lesueur. It is true he was seen in the company of a child during the trip down the Ohio, since Captain Donald Macdonald, listing the passengers, writes: "Mr. Le Seur [*sic*] & one child."<sup>6</sup> But this could be Victor Dupalais, age seven, of whom Lesueur took special care, as he did of the older siblings, André and Virginia,<sup>7</sup> who are mentioned separately by Macdonald as "Mr. Dupalais & his sister."<sup>8</sup> But who were they?

Their father, Captain Pierre Alexandre Poulard de Guémar Dupalais, officer in the French army under Rochambeau (1725-1807), helped George Washington to fight the British and later moved to Philadelphia. After the death of Dupalais and his wife, Lesueur became the guardian of their young children who followed him to New Harmony. Virginia Dupalais played an important role in the communal schools, assisting her "uncle" (as she called Lesueur)<sup>9</sup> with his drawing classes. Born in Philadelphia in 1804, she was an accomplished painter thanks to her talent and Lesueur's tutelage.<sup>10</sup> Robert Dale Owen's journal also alludes to Lesueur's friendship with Virginia and her family, but it never mentions Cecilia Noël.<sup>11</sup>

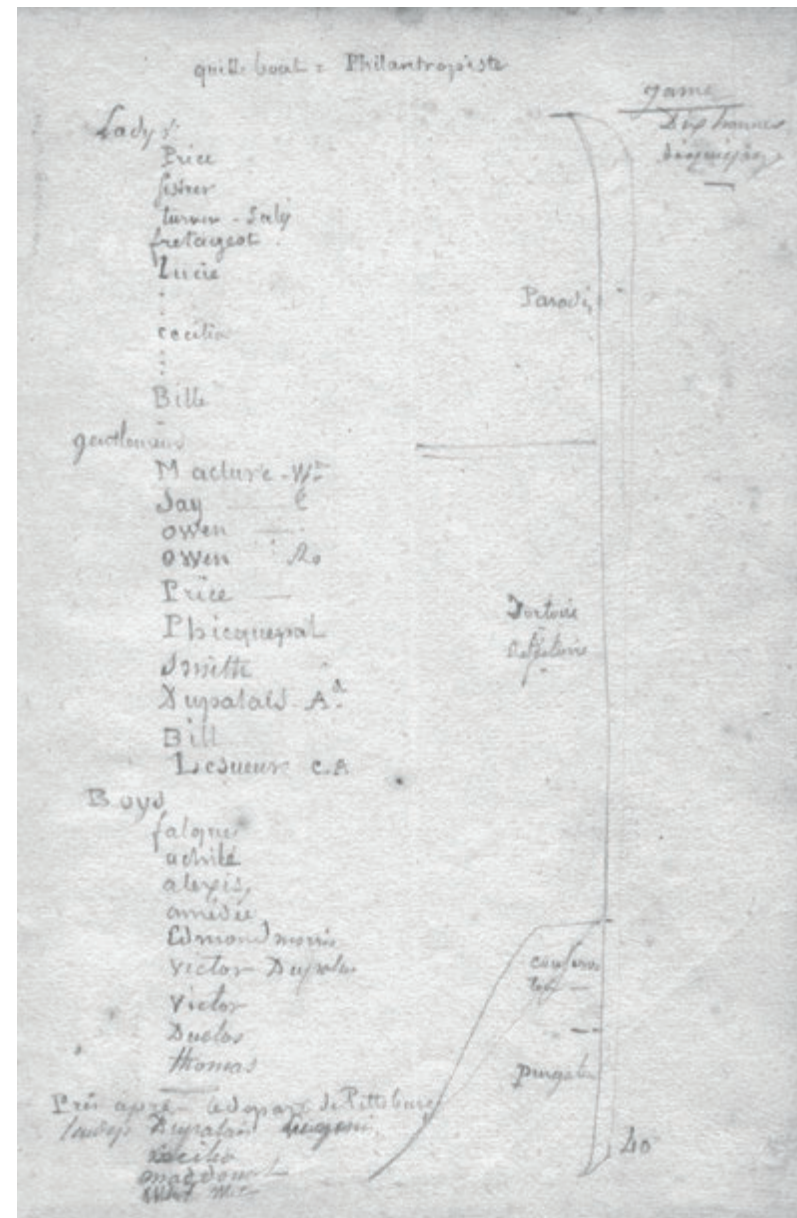
Lesueur himself included Cecilia twice on his list of passengers, indicating, however, that she did not board the *Philanthropist* until January. He created three categories: "Ladys" [*sic*], "Gentlemans" [*sic*] and "Boys." He noted the names of six women, i.e. Hannah Fisher Price, Helen Gregoroffsky Fisher, Sarah Turner—whom he calls both Sal[l]y and Miss Sale [*sic*]—Marie Fretageot, Lucy Sistare and Rose Ann Clark Beal; ten men, i.e. William Maclure, Thomas Say, Robert Owen, Robert Dale Owen, William Price, Guillaume Phiquepal, Charles Schmidt (spelled "Smith" [*sic*]), André Dupalais, John Beal (spelled "Bill" [*sic*]) and himself; and nine boys, i.e. Charles Falque, Achille Fretageot, Alexis Alphonse, Amélie Dufour, Edmund Morris, Victor Dupalais, Victor Duclos, Pierre Duclos and Thomas Riley. On the bottom of the page he added "Boarded after the departure from Pittsburg[h]," and appended six more names: "Ladys [*sic*] Dupalais, Eugeni[e], Cecilia" as well as

“Macdonal[d], Whitwel[l], James.”<sup>12</sup> However, Lesueur’s list is incomplete, which he indicated by leaving empty spaces and dashes. He omitted the names of doctor Price’s three children (Emelia, Sarah and Caroline), the daughter of John Beal (Caroline), Lucy Sistare’s two sisters (Frances and Sarah), Charles Schmidt’s father, the ten members of the crew (only William McCarter’s name is known), and a seventeen-year-old student called Balthazar Obernesser.<sup>13</sup>

As for Robert Vail’s remark on Lesueur’s guardianship, Richard Owen made the following statement in a letter:

When [Lesueur] came to New Harmony during the social experiment he was directly from the West Indies, and brought a young lad and a child, both of whom subsequently married [...].<sup>14</sup>

But when would Lesueur have gone to Santo Domingo to take on Cecilia as a ward? He did not stop at this island when he went to the Antilles in early 1816, and he never left the American continent after that. Is this another legend about our French naturalist? When and where did Robert Vail hear it, and why would someone invent such a story? For this study, only contemporaneous sources that can be substantiated have been used. As for the departure of the utopians for New Harmony, the journals of Donald Macdonald and Robert Dale Owen have proven to be verifiable, thanks to Lesueur’s drawings and annotations. Moreover, the back of drawing n° 41 123, in the archives of the Museum of Le Havre, contains this valuable note: “[...] stayed on board: Whitwell – Say – Lesueur – Dupalais – Lucie [sic] – Eugénie – the two little Sister [sic] & Cecilia.”<sup>15</sup> This is another direct reference to Cecilia Noël, who was among the utopians who completed the trip to New Harmony in January 1826. An intense search turned up yet another document. Typed and signed by Virginia Dupalais Twigg (the granddaughter of Virginia Dupalais and William Augustus Twigg), this three-page biographical note sheds light on the mystery of Cecilia:



Passenger list of the *Philanthropiste* – by C.-A. Lesueur, [January 10, 1826] (CL 41 037)

Courtesy of the Natural History Museum in Le Havre

When the “Boat-Load” landed at New Harmony, in January 1826, Lucy [Sistare] had her two sisters, and Virginia her two brothers and young Cécile Noël, daughter of their older sister Sophie; and all the children were registered for the community school. No other of the girls’ relatives came out to join them, as originally expected, but the girls remained. Thomas Say married Lucy, Madam Fretageot’s son Achilles [*sic*] married Cécile and William [Twigg] wed Virginia.<sup>16</sup>

So Cecilia (or Cécile) is actually the daughter of Virginia’s sister, Sophie Dupalais Noël.<sup>17</sup> This is a valuable piece of information, but it does not reveal the fate of Cecilia’s parents. In the early twentieth century, historian Robert Vail may have heard oral reports about their demise on Santo Domingo by Achille Fretageot’s descendants in New Harmony. If this is the case, the account probably has its roots in the 1820s when Lesueur became Cecilia’s guardian. Still, he never visited Santo Domingo, and we may in fact be dealing with a cover-up story.

Here is another piece of the puzzle. In April 1832 Lesueur wrote a letter to his friend Isaac Hays in Philadelphia, requesting the payment of a bill to... *Sophie Noël*. Cecilia’s mother was definitely alive in 1832, and Lesueur was sending her money.<sup>18</sup> He did not do so directly but proceeded as follows: while in New Harmony, he continued to work for the Academy of Natural Sciences, which paid for his services. Lesueur used Sophie Noël as his agent and sent her the bills she could then present to men like Isaac Hays. Consequently, she would receive the money in lieu of Lesueur. Although nothing proves she kept it, it is possible that Lesueur channeled part of his income to Sophie. Only one letter indicating such business dealings subsists, but it raises questions about Lesueur’s connection to her. Had little Cecilia simply been brought to Indiana to receive a good education, as Virginia Dupalais Twigg wrote in her summary? Or was there more to it? Cecilia would not return to her

mother after the community school closed in 1831, and she married in New Harmony in 1839. Lesueur watched over her, and she lived in his house. Of course, so did Virginia and her brothers, even after Virginia’s marriage to William Twigg in March 1828. But the question remains: aside from their French origins and Lesueur’s guardianship, was there another link between the naturalist and his protégés? Virginia did refer to him as her “uncle,” but Lesueur’s genealogical tree makes it clear that this was a term of endearment, nothing more.<sup>19</sup> Unless this hides another truth. Could Lesueur have been Cecilia’s father? Was he simply helping her mother? Or both?<sup>20</sup> Whatever the answers to these questions, they are not to be found in Lesueur’s correspondence, and we know little of his love-life. Between 1812 and 1815, he did have a liaison with the Countess of Chastenay, Mademoiselle Louise-Marie-Victoire (or Victorine) de Lanty (1771-1855), who continued to enquire about Lesueur’s well-being after his departure with Maclure. But her lover never returned to France, and almost none of Lesueur’s letters on this matter survive,<sup>21</sup> which closes the subject, at least for the moment.

Lesueur was a naturalist and an artist, not a poet. He could only tell his story by writing small technical notes and by rapidly drawing scenes and landscapes as he passed by them. During the trip from Philadelphia to New Harmony, he filled several sketchbooks. The opening picture of that journey shows the Capitol grounds in Harrisburg, where he and his companions spent the first night. Thanks to Robert Dale Owen, we know they met up with Robert Owen and other travelers who had left the same morning by stagecoach.<sup>22</sup> On Lesueur’s watercolor, apart from “Mr. Wilson – Harrisburg,” there are no other indications or remarks.<sup>23</sup> The following days they stopped at Chambersburg, Bedford and Greensburg, and on December 1, the travelers arrived in Pittsburgh at three o’clock in the afternoon. The group initially intended to go to New Harmony by steamboat, but because the water level was very low and the situation had not improved four days later, they decided to find a keelboat.<sup>24</sup>

## Robert Owen Announces his Millennium of Peace

From December 1 through 5, Lesueur was free, and he decided to spend the time visiting Pittsburgh and its fish market. During this period, the city limits were the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers. They were still frozen to the north because of the intense cold. Two covered bridges, with their walls and wooden roofs, became the subjects of drawings.<sup>25</sup> On the south side of the Monongahela was a steep hill, rich in natural materials: chalk, sandstone and coal, all of commercial value. Its exploitation had a direct impact on the city center and surrounding areas, which, because of industrialization, were dirty and unhealthy. Many chimneys spewed black smoke into the polluted atmosphere. Wagons filled with coal rolled along one after the other on the filthy roads. Many houses were badly kept up and unsound, and the people in them seemed to have hard, unhealthy lives.<sup>26</sup> What a contrast with the earthly paradise promised by Robert Owen, who took advantage of every occasion to preach his gospel.

On December 2, 1825, Lesueur visited Fort Duquesne (renamed Fort Pitt) at the spot where the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers join to form the Ohio River. He sketched the old powder house, which reminded him that France had once owned this land.<sup>27</sup> On the back of the watercolor, he wrote:

The only thing left is the fort that used to defend the Allegheny. The ditch is still in good condition. The powder house, which is in the east wing, was dug out of the earth that was covering it. The door is topped by a capitol, above which is a square rock with four holes in it that form a star. The Americans do not want to remember the time when France ruled these territories, and they put on their maps neither the location nor the names of these forts.<sup>28</sup>

From the vantage point of the French remains, Lesueur also drew the bridge on the Monongahela, as well as many barges and steamboats anchored along the river.<sup>29</sup> The low water level prevented large vessels from going through, but on December 5, the utopians were informed that the crew of a keelboat was willing to take them to New Harmony.<sup>30</sup> During the three days it took them to prepare for departure, Owen continued his proselytizing.

The British philanthropist spent most of his time meeting with people who were favorably disposed to his communal project, in particular the members of the Cooperating Society of Allegheny County, founded in July 1825 on Owenite principles.<sup>31</sup> Having failed to establish a true cooperative community in Pittsburgh, they still greeted their spiritual guide with enthusiasm.<sup>32</sup> This was the third time they were visited by Owen; he had already graced them with his presence in December 1824 and June 1825. John Speakman had introduced him to the Unitarian Benjamin Bakewell, a glass manufacturer who was an important promoter of the cause.<sup>33</sup> On December 8, 1825, Bakewell recounted the events in Pittsburgh in a letter to Thomas Pears, his nephew by marriage, who had moved to New Harmony:<sup>34</sup>

[Mr. Owen] and his party, consisting of forty, have arrived, and will at 12 o'clock be ready to embark in a light keel fitted up for the occasion. Unhappily for them it has set in cold, and both rivers are closed just above the town. [...] Especially shall we be glad to hear that the Master Spirit is well received [in New Harmony], and that he may be able to unite all hearts.

Have you had sufficient accession of strength in the well-disposed to commence a community with the prospect of success? [...] Mr. Owen delivered a lecture last night to a very crowded and respectable audience in the Methodist Church. Mr. Page, though somewhat roused by the representations, or rather misrepresentations, of Mr. Prentice, was delighted with it beyond measure, and is, I believe, quite restored to the true faith.<sup>35</sup>



View from Mr. Wilson's Hotel, Harrisburg – by C.-A. Lesueur, November [27 or 28], 1825 (CL 41 001). Lesueur was standing on the intersection of Third and Walnut Streets looking north. The sign indicates Matthew Wilson's tavern on 97 Walnut Street (which in 1836 was moved to the site of the Lochiel Hotel on the southeast corner of Third and Market Streets). Lesueur's watercolor shows the Capitol grounds with, on the left, the 1821 Pennsylvania State Capitol (designed in 1819 by Stephen Hills and destroyed by fire in 1897), and on the right, the buildings of the 1817 State Arsenal on High Street.



Powder magazine of Fort Duquesne (Fort Pitt) at the Point of Pittsburgh – by C.-A. Lesueur, [December] 2, 1825 (CL 46 056)

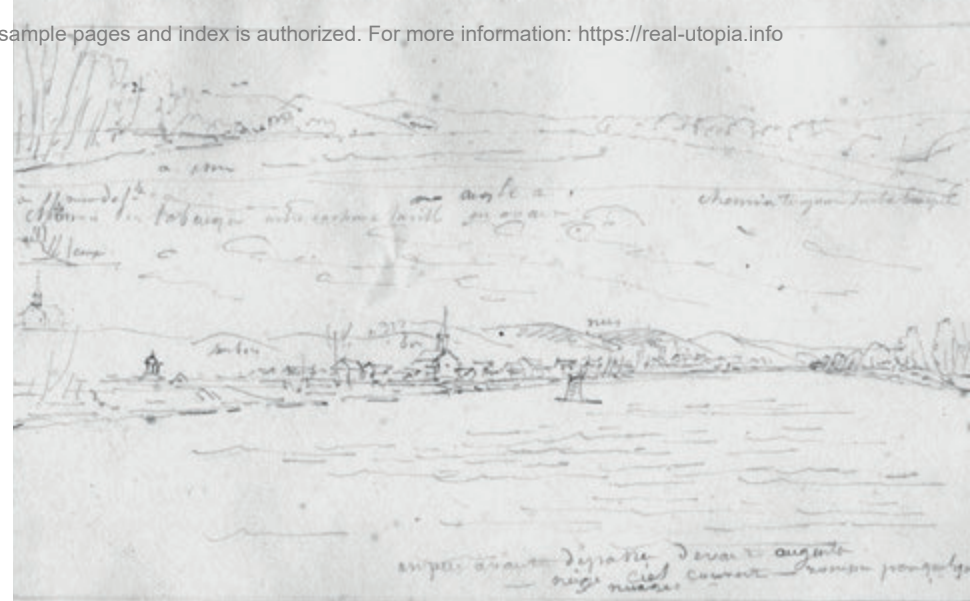
to pass through.<sup>49</sup> It was the most frightening moment of the trip down the Ohio. Lesueur noted the details of the adventure on the back of a quick and hardly recognizable sketch of the rapids:

Beautiful sky – cold – frozen – Louisville low ground: well-built city of brick buildings – we visited it around seven o'clock in the evening – wide streets at right angles – 5 or 6 steamboats were anchored along the bank and in Grass Dear Creek [sic: Beargrass Creek] many keelboats, flatboats, etc. – we went over the little bridge that crosses this little river, our boat was anchored upstream from this bridge – many logs and blocks of ice floated by near us – about 11 p.m. we moved our boat a few hundred yards upstream so that it would catch the current and go through the rapids in the morning. On the morning of [January 20], we picked up the captain who would get us through and we entered the Fall of the Indians in which our boat rocked like in a troubled sea compared to the quiet state of things before the falls where the surface of the river is calm – to go through it we closed all the places where water could come in, no one got off, children, women stayed on board and beheld the spectacle of these foaming rapids in the middle of which, for a short while, we were thrown from side to side – some boats were wrecked here.<sup>50</sup>

Lesueur did not take the time to make a detailed drawing of the rapids, which is regrettable because he did have a moment to do so downstream, when the keelboat stopped at Shippingport to drop off the pilot.<sup>51</sup> After December 1830, fewer and fewer boats would go through the wild waters of the Indian Falls, using instead the new Louisville and Portland Canal, the construction of which began in 1825.

### Debacle at Mount Vernon

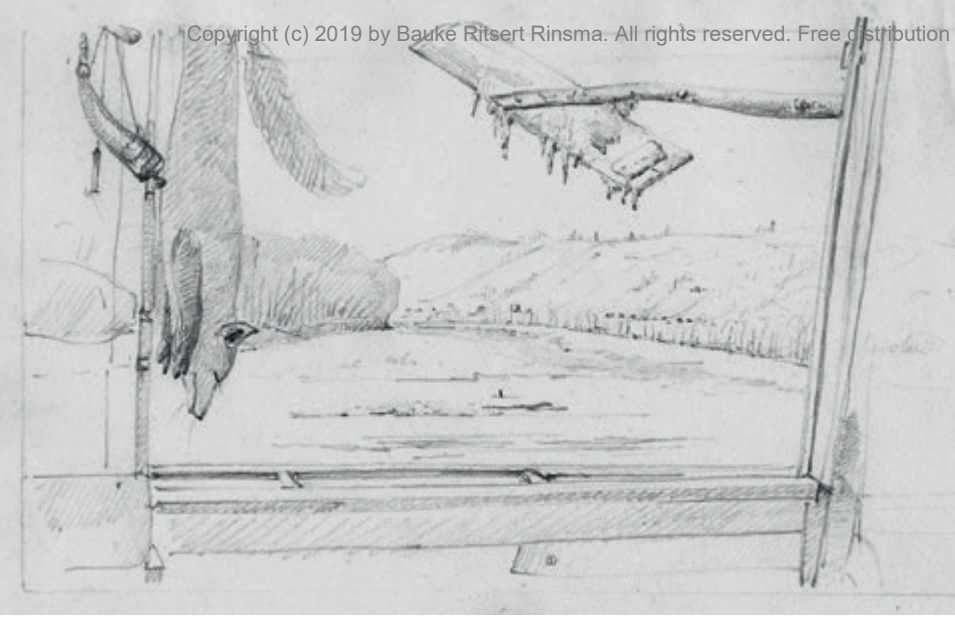
The last three days of the journey on the *Philanthropist* were not uneventful. On Monday, January 23, the travelers



Augusta, Kentucky, January 15 (CL 41 078), and New Richmond, Ohio, January 16, 1826 (CL 41 084) – by C.-A. Lesueur. He noted frame houses were grey with green shutters or simply painted white, red or black.

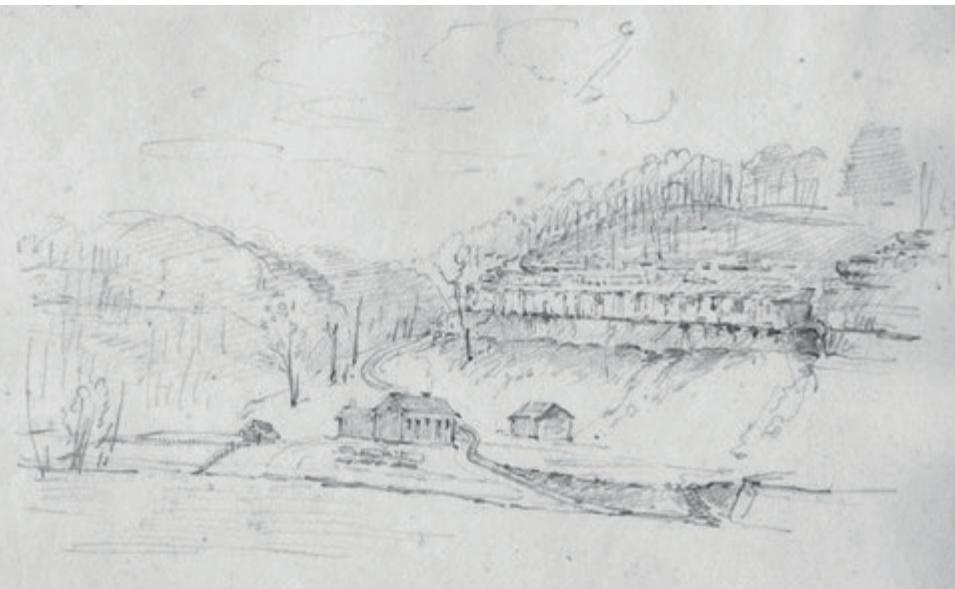
*Courtesy of the Natural History Museum in Le Havre*





The Ohio, five miles upstream from Cincinnati, January 16 (CL 41 085), and the ridge of Charlestown, Indiana, January 19, 1826 (CL 41 099) – by C.-A. Lesueur. A fox and a powder horn are hanging in the door of the *Philanthropist*, seen from the inside. One of the boat's oars is also visible.

Courtesy of the Natural History Museum in Le Havre



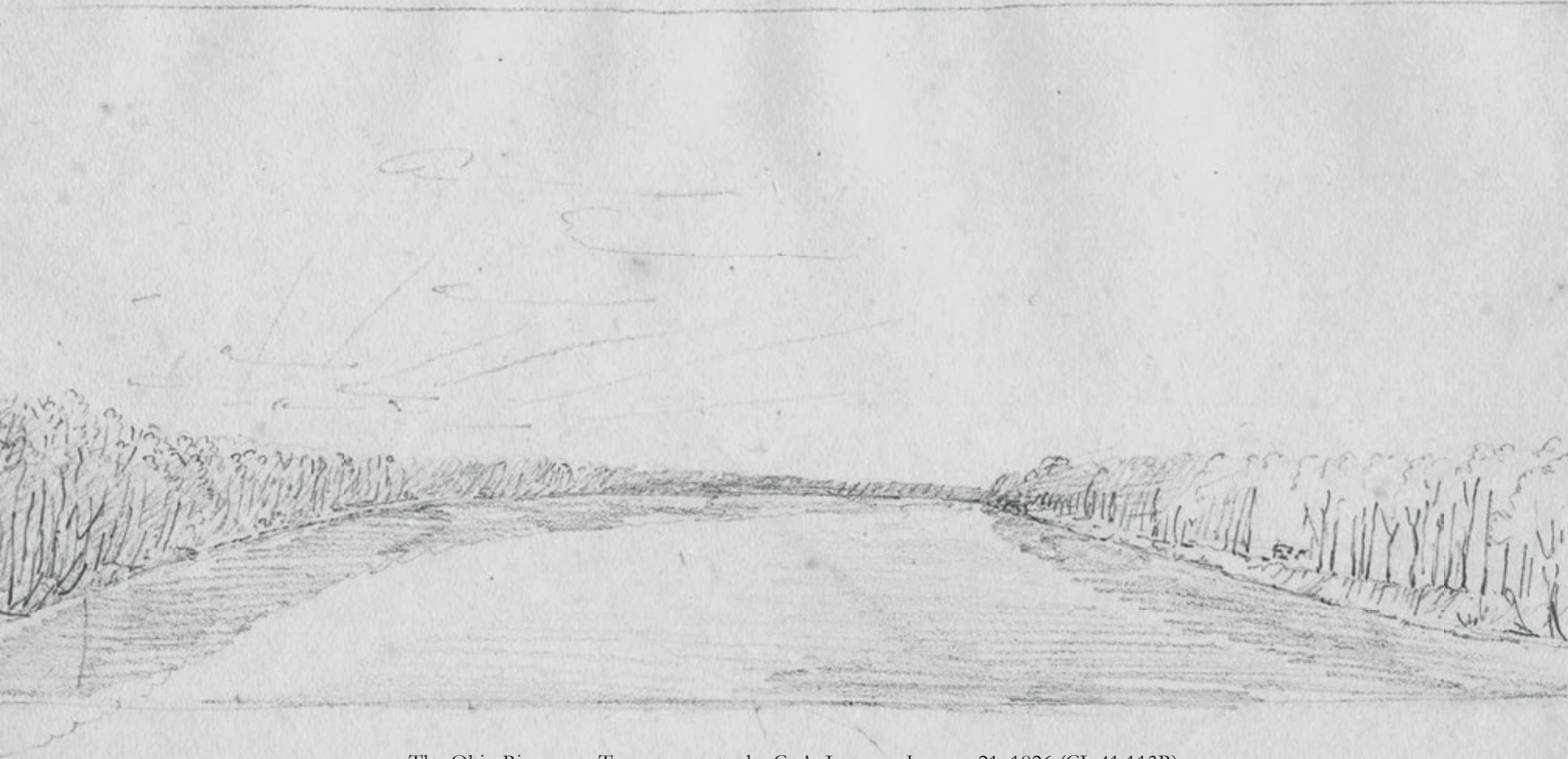
arrived in Mount Vernon, Indiana.<sup>52</sup> Charles Schmidt,<sup>53</sup> Robert Owen's servant, was waiting for them with four carriages. He had gotten there earlier by taking a steamboat shortly after Shippingport to allow the other passengers to get to New Harmony more quickly. However, almost all of them chose to spend another night on the keelboat because of the bad weather. If the snow and cold continued, they were even thinking of going by boat up the Wabash River as planned originally. As a consequence, on January 23, the only person to go to New Harmony was Robert Dale Owen, who borrowed one of the horses Charles Schmidt had brought.<sup>54</sup>

The story of the other passengers—who spent the last days on the *Philanthropist*—seems problematic to many historians. Josephine Mirabella Elliott stated that most of the travelers disembarked on January 23, 1826, and that Say, Lesueur, and a few women and children continued “those final seventy-odd miles up the Wabash to New Harmony.”<sup>55</sup> According to Patricia Tyson Stroud, author of a biography on Thomas Say, his party arrived in New Harmony on the night of January 25.<sup>56</sup> Ernest Théodore Hamy wrote that Maclure and the others left Mount Vernon on January 26, and he added: “The naturalists remained on board; they would arrive later after making the longer trip upstream by way of the Wabash.”<sup>57</sup> Lesueur's detailed notes clarify this point. On the back of the drawing of the Mount Vernon wharf, we read:

Arrival Mount Vernon about 2 o'clock. Mad. Fretageot, Price & her three children & Miss Sale [*sic*], Mrs. Bill [*sic*] & child, Mr. W. Maclure, Price, Macdonald, Piquéal, Robert [Dale] Owen, &c. got off the boat & left the next day, the 24<sup>th</sup>, for Harmony with 4 wagons loaded with goods. Those who stayed on board: Whitwell – Say – Lesueur – Dupalais – Lucie [*sic*] – Eugénie – the two little Sister [*sic*] & Cecilia.

Very cold on the 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>. Very thick ice floes, some more than a mile in length, collided with the boat, making a crashing noise like thunder, and pushed it.<sup>58</sup>





The Ohio River near Troy at sunset – by C.-A. Lesueur, January 21, 1826 (CL 41 113R)

That Saturday evening, after sketching the view above, C.-A. Lesueur wrote a small note on the geological and natural characteristics of the river bank while his keelboat gently floated past some log cabins at the mouth of the Anderson River. Suddenly, the calm and peaceful quiet were brutally interrupted. According to Dennis Friend Hanks (1799-1892), who saw the event unfold, seventeen-year-old Abraham Lincoln, son of the local ferryman, also watched the scene. The future president of the United States got “nigh crazy” when he recognized the boat the newspapers had been writing about. Many years later, in an interview with author and journalist Eleanor Atkinson (1863-1942), Mr. Hanks recounted with a Hoosier accent what happened that evening: “An’ one day arly in the winter, a big keel-boat come down from Pittsburg[h] over the Ohio. They called it ‘the boatload o’ knowledge,’ it had sich a passel o’ books an’ machines an’ men o’ l’arnin’ on it. Then little rowboats an’ rafts crossed over from Kaintucky an’ ox teams an’ pack hosses went through Gentryville and struck across kentry to—to—plague on it! Abe’d tell you in a minute—”. Abraham Lincoln wanted to approach the *Philanthropist* too, but not to tease the passengers like some other people. “Denny,” he said, “thar’s a school an’ thousands o’ books thar, an’ fellers that know everything in creation’ [...]. The schoolin’ cost only about a hundred dollars a year [...].” Dennis Hanks recalled Abe’s father would not even consider sending his son to New Harmony: “Abe’d a broke his back to go, an’ it night about broke his heart when he couldn’t.” *The Boyhood of Lincoln* (New York: The McClure Company, 1908), 29-31.



disciples created their burial ground there because, per an agreement with Father Rapp, they were not allowed to use the Harmonist graveyard.<sup>15</sup>

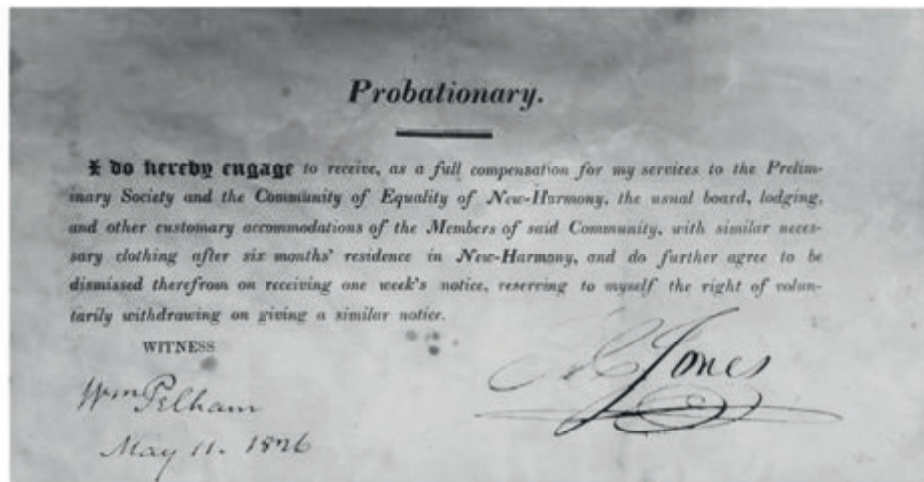
The Ropewalk, a narrow path of a few yards wide and some three hundred yards long, separated an old Indian cemetery and the burial place of the Harmonists, as well as large orchards, from the town center. The path was used to make long ropes for which they cultivated hemp (*Cannabis sativa*). The narrow lane ended inside the rope maker's workshop on Steam Mill Street, south of Tavern Street, not far from community house Number One. Steam Mill Street also led to a cotton and wool factory run by a sixty-horsepower steam engine. Following this street, one would pass by the blacksmith's and the wheelwright's, before arriving at the hospital near the intersection with Main Street.<sup>16</sup>

Disease among the population affected productivity, which added to the long list of problems the community had to cope with. Some historians have argued that Owen's colony included many rascals and idlers who had joined the Society for the sole purpose of benefitting from the British philanthropist's generosity.<sup>17</sup> Yet contemporary accounts state that most of Owen's followers were committed to the experiment. Only a very small number of people may actually have tried to take advantage of the system.<sup>18</sup> From February to May 1826, the main difficulties were caused by bad weather, illness and the important fact that the demographic composition of New Harmony had considerably changed after the departure of the Germans.<sup>19</sup> A welcoming committee may, at some point, have attempted to make a selection among the potential members who arrived at New Harmony. But in their effort to pick out the most competent workers, how could they refuse admission to the families of these enthusiasts who had traveled hundreds of miles to be part of the experiment? William Owen and his committee were therefore confronted with a moral dilemma. As a consequence, immediately after Robert Owen's first publicity campaigns, the town was filled with spouses and nonproductive children, while the positions for qualified

operators in the factories and workshops remained vacant.<sup>20</sup> Utopian Thomas S. Bosson declared on this subject:

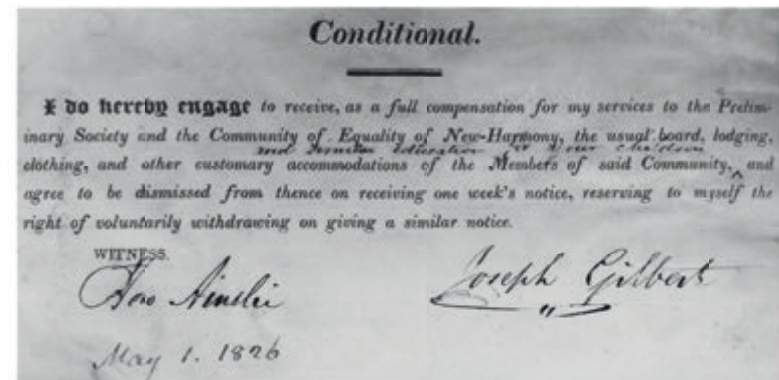
Our manufacturing and mechanical branches may be considered in a state of infancy. Notwithstanding the purchase included most things necessary for prosecuting them on a pretty extensive scale [...]. The transatlantic concerns of our founder left him but little time for completing his arrangements here, and a population of eight hundred persons was, in the short space of six weeks, drawn together, necessarily without much deliberation, or any reference to their professional skill or immediate usefulness.<sup>21</sup>

The result was dramatic, despite the fact that there were workmen in many branches—an experienced foreman cotton spinner, several qualified weavers, a few woolen spinners and a reed maker, an expert superintendant in tanning, four tanners and curriers, at least two distillers, seventeen shoemakers, seven tailors, twelve seamstresses, a good maltster and brewer, four blacksmiths, four wheelwrights, four coopers, one tinsmith, two turners, one machine maker, one cabinet maker, two watch makers, three printers, two paper makers, three sawyers, nine carpenters, two stonecutters, four bricklayers and plasterers, several millwrights, two butchers, two bakers, two gardeners, the newly arrived mechanics, and thirty-six farmers and field laborers. Still, most factories and workshops only produced a fraction of the output of the year before. The flour mill, capable of producing sixty barrels a day, was not fully operational, and the big dye-house with its large copper kettles lay idle for a lack of qualified personnel. On the other hand, the town did manufacture several items in respectable quantities which were sold in the store: soap, candles, glue, rope, boots, shoes and hats.<sup>22</sup> However, the most important goods were not produced in sufficient numbers,<sup>23</sup> and so the monetary system based on accounts with debit and credit entries did not function well.<sup>24</sup> Historian Arthur E. Bestor observed, while quoting some of the contemporary sources:



On May 1, 1826, in order to organize the New Harmony Community of Equality, Robert Owen created four classes of utopian citizens. He selected twenty-five persons who immediately became full members because of their qualities or qualifications. They could add new members to the Society

tory museum for the instruction of the members of the Society and their children.<sup>6</sup> Lesueur had also been planning to explore the area around the town and begin his archeological excavations. The weather was improving, and he had noticed the presence of several funeral mounds in and around New Harmony. He believed these Native American tombs to be much older than generally assumed.<sup>7</sup> According to French archaeologist Jean-Pierre Watté, Lesueur's method of uncovering, while as destructive as most of the excavation works in the nineteenth century, was nonetheless much ahead of its time. Unlike the closet archaeologists, Lesueur went out in the field to study the remains of the Indian village at New Harmony and the cemetery of Bonebank near Mount Vernon. He tried to read the ground, made stratigraphic observations and wrote that a ceramic statuette and a dagger came "from the same stratum and are [presently] in the



Private Collection

by admitting "conditional members," i.e. people who had already proven themselves in the community over a period of six months as "probationary members." A fourth class, or "persons upon trial," was composed of newcomers. When, on May 28, the recruiting system changed, the Agricultural, Commercial and Education Societies had to define their own membership rules.

cabinet of Dr. Troost."<sup>8</sup> Lesueur established comparisons between the cemeteries of New Harmony and Bonebank, and he did not simply uncover human bones but also noted the orientation of the bodies.<sup>9</sup> As Dr. Watté stated:

He took notes, made plans and sketched what he found. [...] The gathered objects were fully sketched: they comprise potsherds which would have been rejected as "rough" or "common" by a considerable number of archaeologists at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and also the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century [...]. Present-day chronologies, however, are based precisely on the analysis of this type of material.

He studied the composition of these objects. [...] He determined the nature of the manufactured materials and objects [...]: grinder of "diabase," axes of "syenite, diabase" [...], pipes of "red jasper" or "gray clayish stone"



Robert Owen's geography class in the Hall or the shoe factory  
– by C.-A. Lesueur, [August-September 1826] (CL 46 241)

*Courtesy of the Natural History Museum in Le Havre*

In August 1826 Robert Owen made his first attempt to establish an alternative school for the residents of New Harmony, separate from the Education Society, because he disagreed with Neef's method and had no control over his teachers. Owen proposed free classes for children, inviting their parents and other adults to accompany them. He convinced the farmers and mechanics of his community to send some two hundred pupils to be instructed by himself and several inexperienced men. These children had been recently withdrawn from the Education Society.<sup>42</sup>



Globe and bust of Robert Owen in the Working Men's Institute

*Photograph by Ritsert Rinsma*

Eyewitness Paul Brown noted about Robert Owen: "He brought some large maps into the Hall, on which the children were to be exercised; and, usually bringing in globes in the evening, the education went on according to appointment. The children were made to point out the names and situations of places on these maps and globes, and to answer a few questions concerning the motions, shape, and size of the world, &c, the effect of all which was said to infuse real general knowledge [...]. Owen and his young teachers exercised them in a similar way at the shoe factory, and once a day took them in procession to the Hall, besides three nights in a week, and once every Sunday. This teaching went on for six weeks."<sup>43</sup> Robert Owen wanted to be in full control of all the affairs of his utopian society, but the alternative school was suspended in October 1826 when William Maclure returned to New Harmony. By this time, Owen was living in Number Five with his son Robert Dale and Marie Fretageot. It was then decided that most of the children would be placed under Madame's jurisdiction, whereas twenty-two others returned to Neef's institution. Owen's school had to close.<sup>44</sup>



*“Inferior and commonplace artists are attached to the establishment of the French Museum, while the Raffaele of zoological painters was suffered to emigrate, and pursued his professional career as a private teacher in Philadelphia.”*

*William John Swainson, 1840*

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

This list of illustrations is organized in two parts. Part 1 presents C.-A Lesueur's art reproduced in this book. It contains twelve sections: Animals, Archeology, England, Lesser Antilles, Eastern Travels, Philadelphia, Journey to New Harmony, New Harmony, Western Travels, Engravings, Manuscripts and Miscellaneous. Each picture is followed by its current catalogue number and archive. Old reference numbers are also provided when they exist. Items followed by an asterisk (\*) were never catalogued by Robert W. G. Vail. The years indicated under recently identified drawings refer to the first date of publication and not to the actual moment of identification. Part 2 contains the list of photographs and other illustrations. It is organized in two sections. Its first section presents the photographs made by the author. Place names are alphabetically arranged. Its second section lists the remaining photographs and illustrations provided by institutions and several persons who helped the author complete the pictures. Reproductions of C.-A. Lesueur's art and documents from the collections of Le Havre, Paris, Germantown, Indianapolis, New Harmony and West Lafayette were digitized or photographed by Ritsert Rinsma. Some archives were given digital copies.

### PART 1: INDEX OF LESUEUR'S ART

ANIMALS (1816-1837)			ENGLAND (1815)		
26	red-tailed black cockatoo (1824) <i>Calyptorhynchus banksii</i>	Coll. 136B#3, ANSP	23	Baynard Saddler and Harness Shop in Penzance (September 1815) [identified by M. L. Hemphill, 1976]	CL 37 031, MHNH
27	black leopards from Java (1824) <i>Panthera pardus melas</i>	Coll. 136B#4, ANSP	29	East Combe Manor (September 1815) [identified by M. L. Hemphill, 1976]	CL 37 008, MHNH
359	painted turtle and smooth soft-shell turtle <i>Chrysemys picta</i> (1833) <i>Tryonix muticus</i> (1826)	CL 78 016, MHNH CL 78 047, MHNH	30	view of London from Greenwich Park (September 1815)	CL 37 006, MHNH [see photo p. 31]
			32	Royal Observatory in Greenwich Park (September 1815)	CL 37 010, MHNH
ARCHEOLOGY			LESSER ANTILLES (1816)		
300	potsherds from Bonebank (March 1828)	CL 41 199, MHNH Vail #867 Leland #219	1	Volcano of Guadeloupe (March 1816)	CL 38 056, MHNH
301	ceramic figurine from Bonebank (March 1828)	CL 41 210, MHNH Vail #867 Leland #219 Hamy p. 76 fig. 11	2	Volcano of Saint Vincent (January 1816)	CL 38 034, MHNH
302	map of the Native American tombs in New Harmony (c. 1830)	CL 41 297, MHNH * Hamy p. 65 fig. 8	7	Saint Kitts and Nevis (March 1816)	CL 38 068V, MHNH

EASTERN TRAVELS (1816-1825)					
4	tree on a rock near the soapstone quarry of Easton (September 13, 1825)	CL 40 217, MHNH Vail #334 Guiffrey #1	113	garden and manor of Joseph Bonaparte at Point Breeze (c. 1821) [ <i>identified by B. R. Rinsma, 2007</i> ]	CL 40 105, MHNH Vail #87 [ <i>incorrectly identified</i> ]
19	removal of half of a church in New Bedford (September 1816)	CL 39 123, MHNH Vail #780 Leland #36 Guiffrey #12	115	view on the Brandywine valley from the piazza of E. I. du Pont (September 2, 1822) [ <i>identified by B. R. Rinsma, 2007</i> ]	CL 39 166, MHNH *
45	road to Albany at Sunset (April 1819) [ <i>previously unidentified</i> ]	CL 39 179, MHNH *	116	residence of Victor Marie du Pont at Louviers (September 1, 1822) [ <i>identified by B. R. Rinsma, 2012</i> ]	CL 40 004, MHNH Vail #7 [ <i>unidentified</i> ] [ <i>see photo p. 117</i> ]
56a	Niagara Falls (July 1816)	CL 46 003, MHNH *	119	Henry Clay Cotton Mill (September 1, 1822) [ <i>identified by B. R. Rinsma, 2012</i> ]	CL 40 006, MHNH Vail #8 [ <i>unidentified</i> ] [ <i>see photo p. 118</i> ]
56b	Niagara Falls (July 1816) [ <i>identified by B. R. Rinsma, 2007</i> ]	CL 46 007, MHNH *	120	residence of Eleuthère Irénée du Pont at Eleutherian Mills (September 2, 1822) [ <i>identified by B. R. Rinsma, 2012</i> ]	CL 39 165R, MHNH * [ <i>see photo p. 120</i> ]
57	view on Lake Champlain (August 17, 1816)	CL 39 103, MHNH Vail #804 Leland #30 Guiffrey #2	159	naturalists under a bridge (August 1825) [ <i>previously unidentified</i> ]	CL 40 079, MHNH Vail #67 [ <i>unidentified</i> ]
58a	port of Albany on the Hudson River (April 1819)	CL 39 185, MHNH Vail #850 Leland #39	163	route to Valley Forge, “where the American army was” (August 23, 1825)	CL 40 122, MHNH Vail #251 Leland #73
58b	Fort George (August 8, 1816)	CL 39 092, MHNH *	164	George Washington’s retreat at Valley Forge (August 23, 1825)	CL 40 124, MHNH Vail #253 [ <i>see photos pp. 166-67</i> ]
59	captured British warships which participated in the Battle of Lake Champlain (August 15, 1816)	CL 39 099, MHNH Vail #807 Leland #29 Guiffrey #6	165	open-pit mining at Mauch Chunk (September 3, 1825)	CL 40 174, MHNH Vail #300 Guiffrey #29
69	Bethlehem, Main Street (October 28, 1816) [ <i>identified by R. G. Schwarz, 1982</i> ]	CL 39 132, MHNH Vail #783 Leland #38	172	Nazareth market house (September 5, 1825)	CL 40 181, MHNH Vail #307 [ <i>see photos pp. 173, 175, 178</i> ]
71	Bethlehem on the Lehigh River (October 28, 1816)	CL 39 133, MHNH Vail #787 Leland #38 Guiffrey #11	176	Nazareth College (September 4, 1825)	CL 40 180, MHNH Vail #306 Leland #82 [ <i>see photos pp. 170-71, 177</i> ]
98	wharf and strand of New Castle on the Delaware River (July 20, 1823) [ <i>previously unidentified</i> ]	CL 40 104, MHNH Vail #86 [ <i>incorrectly identified</i> ]			



	PHILADELPHIA (1816-1825)		127	residence of Robert Morris on Market Street (?) (c. 1822)	CL 40 073, MHNH *
39	Schuylkill Falls and Falls Bridge (c. 1820) [previously unidentified]	CL 39 138, MHNH [partial identification] *	183	side garden of Madame Fretageot's school on Ridge Road (c. 1824)	CL 40 038, MHNH Vail #33
40	Mrs. Smith, Mount Pleasant (c. 1822) [previously unidentified]	CL 40 059, MHNH [partial identification] *	184	front garden of Madame Fretageot's school on Ridge Road (c. 1824)	CL 40 037, MHNH Vail #797
79	view on Market Street from Thomas Jefferson's room (c. 1821) [identified by B. R. Rinsma, 2007]	CL 40 102, MHNH Vail #803 Leland #49 [partial identification]			
91	view on Market Street from Seventh Street (c. 1821) [previously unidentified]	CL 40 072, MHNH Vail #802 [partial identification]			
92	Chestnut Street between Eighth and Ninth Street (September 4, 1824) [previously unidentified]	CL 40 096, MHNH Vail #80			
97	young woman before a window (c. 1821) [previously unidentified]	AS-OS, Box 1, CL 7-9, PWL			
102	Laforest's country seat at Rising Sun and Germantown Roads (c. 1822)	CL 39 150, MHNH Vail #860 Leland #54			
107	children playing in Filbert Street (1822) [identified by B. R. Rinsma, 2007]	CL 39 160, MHNH *			
108	Germantown school (c. 1822) [identified by B. R. Rinsma, 2007]	CL 39 148, MHNH *			
111	visit to Reuben Haines and his family (August 12, 1824) [identified by J. M. Elliott, 1994]	WYCK			
125	Cartmell & English, Blacksmiths (c. 1822) [previously unidentified]	CL 39 156, MHNH Vail #856 Leland #46			
126	corner of Tenth and, Chestnut Streets looking southeast (c. 1822)	CL 39 151, MHNH Vail #855 Leland #45			
				JOURNEY TO NEW HARMONY (1825-1826)	
			189	<i>Philanthropist</i> on the Ohio, upstream from Captina Island (January 10, 1826)	CL 41 038, MHNH Vail #129
			195	view from Mr. Wilson's hotel in Harrisburg (November 27 or 28, 1825) [previously unidentified]	CL 41 001, MHNH Vail #810 Leland #88 Guiffrey #18 [partial identification]
			196	powder magazine of Fort Duquesne at the Point of Pittsburgh (December 2, 1825)	CL 46 056, MHNH Vail #792 Guiffrey #35 [often misinterpreted]
			197	Monongahela River and its bridge, seen from the ruins of Fort Duquesne (December 2, 1825)	CL 46 057, MHNH Vail #793 [unidentified]
			198	departure of the <i>Philanthropist</i> , Thursday, 2 p.m. (December 8, 1825)	CL 41 002, MHNH Vail #94 Leland #89
			201a	men singing and dancing on deck of the <i>Philanthropist</i> (January 13, 1826) [scene previously unidentified]	CL 41 065, MHNH Vail #157
			201b	Virginia Dupalais, William Maclure and Marie Fretageot on board of the <i>Philanthropist</i> (January 1826) [faces previously unidentified]	CL 41 096, MHNH Vail #190
			216	East Side [ <i>sic</i> ] of Economy Town (December 10, 1825) [buildings previously unidentified]	CL 41 008, MHNH Vail #100 Leland #93

217	West Side [ <i>sic</i> ] of Economy Town (December 10, 1825) [ <i>buildings previously unidentified</i> ]	CL 41 009, MHNH Vail #101 Leland #93	240a	breaking the ice of the Ohio (January 8, 1826)	CL 41 019, MHNH Vail #111
225	Stephen Phillips and John Graham's shipyard in Phillipsburg (December 10, 1825) [ <i>previously unidentified</i> ]	CL 41 011, MHNH Vail # 103 [incorrectly identified]	240b <i>see</i> p. 227	cutting through the ice to open a channel for the <i>Philanthropist</i> (January 8, 1826) [ <i>identified by J. M. Elliott, 1969</i> ]	CL 41 018, MHNH Vail #110 Leland #95 Guiffrey #19
228	supper on the <i>Philanthropist</i> (December 8, 1825)	CL 41 006, MHNH #Vail #98 Leland #92 Guiffrey #13	241	boat landing of Steubenville on a misty evening (January 9, 1826)	CL 41 029, MHNH Vail #121 Leland #100 Guiffrey #20
234a	first bridge northwest of Pittsburgh (December 25, 1825)	CL 41 005, MHNH Vail #96 Leland #91	242	port of Cincinnati, the <i>Philanthropist</i> and its passengers (January 17, 1826)	CL 41 087, MHNH Vail #180 Leland #110
234b	view on the Ohio River from a farm near Safe Harbor (January 1826) [ <i>previously unidentified</i> ]	CL 46 054, MHNH *	243	ladies of the <i>Philanthropist</i> (January 18, 1826) [ <i>faces previously unidentified</i> ]	CL 41 089-1, MHNH Vail #181 Leland #111 Guiffrey #15
235	arrival at Safe Harbor, six miles miles below Beaver (December 11, 1825)	CL 41 012, MHNH Vail #104	244	covered wagons attached to the roofs of three flatboats near Big Grave Creek (January 10, 1826)	CL 41 036, MHNH Vail #128
236	New Year's Eve at Safe Harbor (December 31, 1825)	CL 46 051, MHNH *	245a	Gallipolis on the Ohio River (January 13, 1826)	CL 41 061, MHNH Vail #152
237	return of Mr. Maclure and Madame Fretageot from Beaver on the Ohio (December 31, 1825) [ <i>scene previously unidentified</i> ]	CL 46 050, MHNH *	245b	Big Sandy River at its confluence with the Ohio (January 13, 1826)	CL 41 064, MHNH Vail #156 Leland #103
238	<i>Philanthropist</i> trapped in the ice between Raccoon Creek and Montgomery Island (December 30, 1825) [ <i>identified by J. M. Elliott, 1969</i> ]	CL 41 016, MHNH Vail #108 [unidentified]	246a	two family boats on the Ohio Brush Creek (January 14, 1826)	CL 41 068, MHNH Vail #160 Leland #104
239a	log cabin where Piquepal was taken after his accident (January 1826) [ <i>previously unidentified</i> ]	CL 41 017, MHNH Vail #109 [unidentified]	246b	flatboats transporting hemp and salt near the twin Manchester Islands (January 14, 1826)	CL 41 069, MHNH Vail #161
239b	view of the Ohio, Montgomery Island and the boat landing of Safe Harbor (December 11, 1825) [ <i>identified by J. M. Elliott, 1969</i> ]	CL 41 013, MHNH Vail #105 [incorrectly identified]	247a	Augusta, Kentucky, on the Ohio River (January 15, 1826)	CL 41 078, MHNH Vail #171 Leland #107
			247b	New Richmond on the Ohio River (January 16, 1826)	CL 41 084, MHNH Vail #177 Leland #108
			248a	Ohio River five miles upstream from Cincinnati (January 16, 1826)	CL 41 085, MHNH Vail #178 Guiffrey #16
			248b	ridge of Charlestown, Indiana (January 19, 1826)	CL 41 099, MHNH Vail #192 Leland #112

249	Ohio River near Troy at sunset (January 21, 1826) [ <i>previously unidentified</i> ]	CL 41 113R, MHNH Vail #207	268	picnic in the shade of the flour mill (c. 1832) [ <i>previously unidentified</i> ]	CL 41 163, MHNH Vail #752 [unidentified]
251	Debauch at Mount Vernon (January 25, 1826)	CL 41 124, MHNH Vail #218 Leland #114 [ <i>see photo p. 250</i> ]	269	fishing and hunting near (1832) the flour mill and Cut-off dam	CL 41 169, MHNH Vail #744
252	wharf of Mount Vernon (January 23, 1826)	CL 41 123, MHNH Vail #217	273	New Harmony's brewer and distiller John Phillips peeling apples (c. 1830) [ <i>identified by J. M. Elliott, 1994</i> ]	CL 1-2, PWL
253	old courthouse of Mount Vernon (January 26, 1826) [ <i>previously unidentified</i> ]	CL 41 125, MHNH Vail #219	274	wine press house, brick church and Lesueur's house, seen from his garden (c. 1831)	CL 41 160, MHNH Vail #749 Leland #131 Hamy p. 56 fig. 7
	NEW HARMONY (1826-1837)		277	drawing lessons on the bridge and beam over the Cut-off stream (1826) [ <i>previously unidentified</i> ]	CL 46 117, MHNH *
129	Harmonist <i>Door of Promise</i> , the north entrance of the brick church (c. 1831) [ <i>identified by W. E. Wilson, 1964</i> ]	CL 46 101, MHNH * [ <i>see photos pp. 130, 215</i> ]	279	pupils drawing from nature on a tree near the wooden lock at the water inlet of the Cut-off (1826) [ <i>for the location see CL 46 116 in J. Bonnemains, Dossier 46</i> ]	CL 46 115, MHNH *
153	Harmonist brick church and community house Number Three (c. 1830) [ <i>identified by J. M. Elliott, 1993</i> ]	CL 46 110, MHNH *	280	horses eating in front of the tavern's smoke house (c. 1830) [ <i>previously unidentified</i> ]	CL 46 104, MHNH *
255	ferry and boat landing north of New Harmony (May 17, 1826)	CL 41 132, MHNH Vail #223	281	sugar camp on the road to Mount Vernon (February 25, 1826)	CL 42 001-2, MHNH Vail #791 Leland #132 Guiffrey #17-1 Hamy p. 64 <i>bis</i> fig. 1
257 <i>see</i> p. 156	town square of New Harmony (May 1826)	CL 41 151, MHN Vail #242 Guiffrey #28	294	Number Five in the shade (June 2, 1827) [ <i>identified by J. M. Elliott, 1994</i> ]	CL 46 243, MHNH *
260	stable behind the Rapp-Maclure mansion (c. 1830) [ <i>previously unidentified</i> ]	CL 46 107, MHNH *	297	boat landing of New Harmony with a view on Cut-off Island (March 25, 1828) [ <i>previously unidentified</i> ]	CL 41 188, MHNH *
261	south side of New Harmony's town square (c. 1830) [ <i>identified by J. M. Elliott, 1993</i> ]	CL 46 114, MHNH *	332	departure of a friend (June 2, 1827) [ <i>previously unidentified</i> ]	CL 46 242, MHNH *
265	Harmonist churches and Lesueur's house on Church Street (c. 1833) [ <i>identified by J. M. Elliott, 1993</i> ]	CL 46 109, MHNH *			

303 <i>see p. 13</i>	view of New Harmony and the Wabash, seen from Indian Mound (autumn of 1832) <i>[identified by J. M. Elliott, 1993]</i>	CL 46 108, MHNH * <i>[see photo p. 148]</i>	346	stone granary, Lesueur's house, wine press house and Number Five (c. 1828) <i>[identified by J. M. Elliott, 1993]</i>	CL 46 113, MHNH * <i>[see photo p. 347]</i>
304	two men drawing at the west entrance of New Harmony's brick church (1830) <i>[identified by J. M. Elliott, 1994]</i>	CL 46 106, MHNH *	356	New Harmony buildings related to the United States Geological Survey (November 15, 1831)	CL 41 161, MHNH Vail #750
317a	adult evening class with Marie Fretageot (August-September 1826) <i>[previously unidentified]</i>	CL 46 240, MHNH *	MIDWESTERN TRAVELS (1826-1837)		
317b	sketch of five faces (August-September 1826) <i>[previously unidentified]</i>	CL 46 239, MHNH *	10	marching field of Vincennes (June 1834) <i>[most buildings previously unidentified]</i>	CL 41 182, MHNH Vail #734
324	six o'clock in the evening at sunset (c. 1830) <i>[previously unidentified]</i>	CL 46 112, MHNH *	14	Wabash at Vincennes (June 1834) <i>[buildings previously unidentified]</i>	CL 41 186, MHNH Vail #736 <i>[see photo p. 15]</i>
328	Robert Owen's geography class (August-September 1826) <i>[previously unidentified]</i>	CL 46 241, MHNH *	16	houses of John Badollet and William Henry Harrison in Vincennes (November 2, 1833)	CL 41 177, MHNH Vail #713 <i>[see photo p. 17]</i>
329	on the doorstep of Number Five (c. 1827) <i>[previously unidentified]</i>	CL 46 247, MHNH *	143	William Hall's tavern in Wanborough (May 21, 1826) <i>[identified by B. I. Madden, 1974]</i>	CL 41 142, MHNH Vail #233
331	girl writing to her boyfriend (August 31, 1826) <i>[this may be Camilla Wright]</i>	CL 46 244, MHNH *	144	Cauliflower Lodge in Wanborough, home of Morris Birkbeck (May 19, 1826) <i>[identified by N. J. B. Plomley, 1971]</i>	CL 41 137, MHNH Vail #228 <i>[see photo p. 147]</i>
333	Le Malade Imaginaire (c. 1827) <i>[previously unidentified]</i>	CL 46 246, MHNH *	145	Park House in Albion, home of Richard Flower (May 25, 1826) <i>[identified by B. I. Madden, 1974]</i>	CL 41 146, MHNH Vail #237
335 <i>see p. 293</i>	the angel and the serpent (June 2, 1827) <i>[previously unidentified]</i>	CL 46 245, MHNH *	146	breakfast at William Hall's tavern in Wanborough (May 21, 1826) <i>[identified by B. I. Madden, 1974]</i>	CL 41 141, MHNH Vail #232 Guiffrey #48
341	Thomas Say on the doorstep of Number Five (c. 1834) <i>[identified by J. M. Elliott, 1994]</i>	K:2-130, HSP	281	sugar camp on the road to Mount Vernon (February 25, 1826)	CL 42 001-2, MHNH Vail #791 Leland #132 Guiffrey #17-1 Hamy p. 64 <i>bis</i> fig. 1
345	backside of Church Street, seen from West Street (c. 1828) <i>[identified by J. M. Elliott, 1993]</i>	CL 46 103, MHNH *			

283	mouth of the Wabash, seen from the Ohio River (February 26, 1826)	CL 42 005, MHNH Vail #363 Leland #116		MANUSCRIPTS	
			5-6	contract between Charles- Alexandre Lesueur and William Maclure (August 8, 1815)	CL 64 019, MHNH
284	boat landing of Trinity on the Ohio River (April 18, 1826)	CL 42 087, MHNH Vail #447 Leland #128 Guiffrey #26 Loir #20			
			180	letter by C.-A. Lesueur to the Professors in Paris (August 4, 1826)	AJ15-573, CHAN
285	interior of Captain Paul Anderson's flatboat (February 26, 1826)	CL 42 003-2, MHNH Vail #361 Leland #206 Guiffrey #17-2 Hamy p. 64 <i>bis</i> fig. 2			
			190	first page of C.-A. Lesueur's sketchbook from Philadelphia to Mount Vernon (January 25, 1826)	CL 41 000, MHNH Vail Vol. II (p. 31) Leland B-v (p. 71)
286	boat landing of Ste. Genevieve, "Mother City of the West" (April 11, 1826)	CL 42 079, MHNH Vail #439 Leland #166			
			192	passenger list of the <i>Philanthropist</i> (January 10, 1826) [ <i>several names previously unidentified</i> ]	CL 41 037, MHNH *
287	boat landing of Smithland on the Ohio River (February 28, 1826)	CL 42 019, MHNH Vail #377 Leland #122 Loir #23			
				MISCELLANEOUS	
288	Tyawapatia [ <i>sic</i> ] Bottom or Commerce Town (April 13, 1826)	CL 42 084, MHNH Vail #790 Guiffrey #27 Loir #25			
			33	Lesueur's calling card (c. 1822)	W9-41931, HMLW
289a	Lesueur, Troost, Kellogg and their horse (March 27, 1826)	CL 42 054, MHNH Vail #414 Loir #18			
			119	Danse Macabre (June 28, 1830) [ <i>identified by J. M. Elliott, 1980</i> ]	Series I, Item A-1, KDO
			316	Marie Fretageot's portrait (c. 1826)	WMI
289b	three black workers mining near Potosi, Missouri (March 27, 1826)	CL 42 055, MHNH Vail #415 Loir #19			
			330	two women of the community (c. 1826) [ <i>identified by J. M. Elliott, 1994</i> ]	AS-OS, Box 1, CL 7-6, PLW
291	Springfield Iron Furnace and Forges, opened in 1823 (March 27, 1826)	CL 42 096, MHNH Vail #712 Guiffrey #24			
				ENGRAVINGS	
298	toppled tree with skeletons in its roots at Bonebank (March 29, 1828)	CL 41 194, MHNH Vail #529 Loir #33 [ <i>see photo p. 299</i> ]			
			82	rattlesnake on a rock [frontispiece]	John Sanderson, <i>Biography of the Signers to the Declaration of Independence</i> (1820)
307	Nashoba near Memphis (April 19, 1828)	CL 43 122, MHNH Vail #572			
			84	skulls and horns of a deer	<i>APS Transactions</i> , n.s., 1 (1818): 380 <i>bis</i>
351	geological cross-section of the cliff at Summer Farm near Cave-in-Rock (April 1, 1828)	CL 41 232, MHNH Vail #535			
			85	raccoon and American badger	John Godman, <i>American Natural History</i> (1826), 1:160 <i>bis</i>

87	Genus <i>Actinia</i> (1817)	<i>ANSP Journal</i> , 1, no. 1 (1817): 186 bis	352	plan and profile of Wilkinson's Cave at Mine Lamotte (c. 1827)	CL 42 041-1, MHNH Vail #865 Leland #162
122a	Freshwater Bass Lesueur's <i>Cichla aenea</i> [ <i>Centrarchus aeneus</i> ]	<i>ANSP Journal</i> 2, no. 2 (1822): 439	360	eight printed pages of Lesueur's <i>Walnut Hills Fossil Shells</i> (1829)	CL 45 141, 45 148, 45 149, 45 151, 45 142, 45 152, 45 155, 45 156, MHNH
122b	Freshwater Drum Lesueur's <i>Sciaena oscula</i> [ <i>Aplodinotus grunniens Rafinesque</i> ]	<i>ANSP Journal</i> 2, no. 2 (1822): 441	361	frontispiece of Lesueur's <i>Walnut Hills Fossil Shells</i> (1829)	CL 45 120, MHNH Vail #490 Hamy p. 69 fig. 9
290	<i>Archimedes</i> of Lesueur [Genus <i>Bryozoans</i> ] (c. 1827)	CL 42 201-3, MHNH	366 see p. 20	map of New Harmony, Indiana (1834)	E.-T. Hamy, <i>Les Voyages du Naturaliste Ch. Alex. Lesueur en Amérique du Nord (1815-1837)</i> , 54 fig. 6 Vail #814
338	title page of Lesueur's <i>Fishes of North America</i>	C. -A. Lesueur, <i>American Ichthyology Or Natural History of the Fishes of North America</i> (1827), 1	411	Lesueur's view and cross-section of Cap de la Hève near Le Havre	<i>Comptes-rendus Hebdomadaires des Séances de l'Académie des Sciences</i> 18 (1844): 227
339	first three pages of Lesueur's <i>Fishes of North America</i>	C. -A. Lesueur, <i>American Ichthyology Or Natural History of the Fishes of North America</i> (1827), 3-5			

## PART 2: INDEX OF PHOTOGRAPHS AND OTHER REPRODUCTIONS

### PHOTOS BY RITSERT RINSMA (2004-2015)

Albion (IL): Birkbeck's Wanborough estate, 147  
 Bethlehem (PA): Bell House, 73; cemetery, 76; church, 73; colonial industrial district, 64; community house, 76; girls' seminary, 77; Main Street, 67-68; single brethren's house, 66; single sisters' house, 77; Sun Inn, 74-75; tannery, 62, 72; panoramic view, 70; waterworks, 65  
 Bethlehem archives: Bethlehem 1812 map (MCA), 60; Henry Steinhauer's portrait (MCA), 61; Nazareth map (MCA), 174; Sun Inn daybook (MCA), 75  
 Economy (PA): barn, 205; cabinet maker shop, 205; Church Street, 204-6; community store, 210, 218; feast hall and museum, 215; garden, 218, 221; Great House, 208-9, 212, 219-20; Harmony statue, 222-23; David Lenz's house, 207; map, 203; new church, 209; old church, 213; F. Rapp's former dwelling, 213; G. Rapp's former dwelling, 212; stable, 204; tailor and shoe shop, 210, 218; warehouse and granary, 211, 214; water pump, 214  
 Economy archives: 1858 map (OEVA), 203  
 London (England): panoramic view, 31  
 Mount Vernon (IN): boat landing, 250; Bonebank, 299  
 Nazareth (PA): church, 173; Circle, 173, 178; gray cottage, 168;

Gnadenstadt, 169; William Henry's house, 173; Andreas Gottfried Kern's house, 178; Nazareth Hall, 170-71; parsonage, 173; single sisters' house, 177; South Main Street, 175; George Whitefield's house, 179  
 New Harmony (IN): account book, 254; Atheneum, xviii; John Beal's house, 327; George Bentel's house, 342; boat landing, xxii; burial grounds, 309-10; cooper shop, 327; "Door of Promise," 130; double log cabin, xvii, 141-42; granary, 313; Hodge-Fretageot House, 266; Indian Mound, 148; labyrinth, ii-vi; David Lenz's house, 157, 263-64, 270, 323; log cabins, 141, 157, 263-64, 270, 322-23, 325, 344; Neef-Lesueur House, 130, 347; Number Two, 262, 318-19; Number Five, 310-12; Owen brothers' house, 340, 343; Jane Owen's house, 326; Roofless Church, xx-xxi; Thomas Say's house, 308; Salomon Wolf's house, xxv, 342; Working Men's Institute, xii  
 New Harmony archives: Marie Duclos Fretageot's portrait by C.-A. Lesueur [?] (WMI), 316; W. Maclure's geological map (WMI), 49; W. Maclure's journal (WMI), 136; William Maclure's portrait by Fournier and Chrétien, 372; William Maclure's portrait by T. J. Northcote (WMI), 230; W. Maclure, G. Phiqupal and his pupils by J.-G. Milbert (WMI), 43; J. Neef's contract with W. Maclure (KDO), 42; Joseph Neef's portrait by D. D. Owen (WMI), 37; New Harmony

Community contracts (private), 296; New Harmony deed (WMI), 150; New-Harmony Gazette (WMI), 154; Robert Owen's bust and globe (WMI), 328  
 Paris (France) archives: Lesueur's letter (CHAN), 180  
 Philadelphia (PA): Germantown Union School, 109; Jacob Graff House (Market Street), 80; Wyck Historic House (Germantown), 110, 112  
 portraits: Henry Steinhauer (MCA), 61; Marie Duclos Fretageot (WMI), 316; William Maclure (WMI), 230, 372 (WMI); Maclure, Phiquepal and his pupils (WMI), 43; Joseph Neef (WMI), 37  
 rivers and streams: Fox River, 186; Lehigh River, 70; Monocacy Creek, 63; Ohio River, 250, 282; Wabash River, 8-9, 187, 278, 299, 336-37  
 Valley Forge (PA): Washington's retreat, 166-67  
 Vincennes (IN): Grouseland, 17  
 Wilmington (DE): Eleuthère du Pont's house (Eleutherian Mills), 114b, 120; Henry Clay Cotton Mill (Eleutherian Mills), 118; Victor du Pont's house (Louviers), 114a, 117  
 Wilmington archives: Lesueur's calling card (HMLW), 33

#### PHOTOS BY OTHER AUTHORS

Harmony photographs by Donald E. Pitzer: Harmonist warehouse, 51; Frederick Rapp's house, 50; Waldman family house, 52  
 New Harmony: brick church (repr. George B. Lockwood), 314; brick church (repr. Nora Chadwick Fretageot), 412; B. R. Rinsma in front of double log cabin, by Manon Rinsma, xvi  
 Vincennes waterfront photograph by Richard Day, 15

#### OTHER ARCHIVAL REPRODUCTIONS

Apollo 17 mission photos by Eugene Cernan, 362-365 (repr. National Aeronautics and Space Administration in Washington, DC)  
 Th. Bacon's *New Atlantis*, 21 (repr. University of Houston-Clear Lake)  
 J. Bentham's portrait by C. Fox, 233 (repr. Wellcome Trust, Wellcome Library in London)  
 Cadmos and Harmony by G. A. Rusconi, 224 (repr. Stéphane Lojkiné)  
 M. D. Fretageot and C.-A. Lesueur by J. Chappellsmith's, 105 (repr. Ralph G. Schwarz for Historic New Harmony)  
 M. D. Fretageot's portrait, 406 (repr. 1914 *New Harmony Guide*)  
 C.-A. Lesueur's aquarelle by K. Bodmer, 348 (repr. Malcolm Varon for the Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha)  
 C.-A. Lesueur's engraving by K. Bodmer, 305 (repr. Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris)  
 C.-A. Lesueur's frontispiece for John Sanderson's book, 82 (repr. Philip J. Weimerskirch)  
 C.-A. Lesueur's portrait by V. M. Gribayedoff, 420 (repr. 1895 *Popular Science Monthly*)  
 C.-A. Lesueur's portrait by C. W. Peale, 24 (repr. Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University)

C.-A. Lesueur and G. Troost's article on minerals, 358 (repr. *American Journal of Science and Arts*)  
 C.-A. Lesueur's skulls and horns for Caspar Wistar's article, 84 (repr. Philip J. Weimerskirch)  
 W. Maclure's portrait by C. W. Peale, 24 (repr. Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University)  
 W. Maclure's portrait by T. Sully, 160 (repr. Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University)  
 Manual Training School publicity by J. Chappellsmith, 320 (repr. Ralph G. Schwarz for Historic New Harmony)  
 Map of Bethlehem, 60 (repr. Moravian Church Archives in Bethlehem)  
 Map of Harmony by Eusebius Böhm, 55 (repr. Ohio History Connection in Columbus)  
 Map of New Harmony by Eusebius Böhm, 258 (repr. Ohio History Connection in Columbus)  
 Map of New Harmony and surroundings (made in Economy, October 31, 1832), 267 (repr. Indiana Historical Society in Indianapolis)  
 Map of Philadelphia, 101 (printed by H. S. Tanner)  
 New Harmony labyrinth drawn by David Schnee, 430 (repr. 1914 *New Harmony Guide*)  
 New Lanark Mills by John Winning, 133 (repr. New Lanark Trust, New Lanark Mills)  
 G. Ord's portrait by J. Neagle, 88 (repr. Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University)  
 D. D. Owen's portrait, 354 (repr. 1895 *Popular Science Monthly*)  
 Richard Owen's portrait, 315 (repr. Purdue University Archives and Special Collections in West Lafayette)  
 Robert Owen by J. Chappellsmith, 138 (repr. Ralph G. Schwarz for Historic New Harmony)  
 Robert Owen's portrait by W. H. Brooke, 160 (repr. National Portrait Gallery)  
 Robert Owen's "Universal Peace Maker," 199 (repr. John F. C. Harrison)  
 R. D. Owen's portrait, 357 (repr. Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C.)  
 J. H. Pestalozzi's portrait with grandson, 35 (repr. Zentralbibliothek in Zürich)  
 Quadrille Dancing by G. Hunt, 134 (reproduced by New Lanark Trust, New Lanark Mills)  
 G. Rapp's portrait by Phineas Staunton, Jr., 53 (repr. Old Economy Village Archives in Ambridge)  
 G. Rapp deeding New Harmony to R. Owen by H. H. Hawkins, 151 (photograph by Zachary Straw)  
 Saint-Simon's portrait by J.-E. Vignères, 232 (repr. Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris)  
 Th. Say's portrait by C. W. Peale, 94 (repr. Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University)  
 Satellite image of New Harmony, 20 (published by Google Maps) Smithsonian Institution, 355 (repr. Thomas McGill publisher)  
 G. Troost's portrait by C. W. Peale, 89 (repr. Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University)

## THE LABYRINTH



*The New Harmony labyrinth, drawn from memory by David Schnee, aged 85, who was taken there by his father as a child in 1826. The hedges were cut down about 1840.*



## GENERAL INDEX OF PERSONS, PLACES, INSTITUTIONS AND WORKS MENTIONED

*Names of buildings, constructions and streets documented in this book can be found under the main- or subentries “buildings and constructions” and “street names” for each town. Exceptions are the “Neef-Lesueur House,” “New Harmony churches,” “New Harmony granary,” “Number One” to “Number Five,” and “Owen’s Number One,” which are main entries. Sketches by C.-A. Lesueur are under the main- or subentries “drawn by Lesueur” after a place or person’s name.*

### A

- Abadie, Hilarian, 122-23  
 Abadie, Matthieu, 122-23  
 Abernasser [*sic*]. *See* Obernesser, Balthazar  
 Académie de Paris, 386n57  
 Académie des Sciences de l’Institut de France (Paris), 3, 90  
 Académie Royale de Médecine (Paris), 87  
 Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia:  
   Desmarest’s membership of, 87;  
   disseminates Useful Knowledge, 131;  
   Lesueur rents storeroom under, 124, 191, 387n94, 393n1; Lesueur works for ANSP in New Harmony, 193, 394n20; Lesueur’s portrait in, 24 [reproduction], 85, 94; Lesueur’s cockatoo in, 26 [reproduction]; Lesueur’s home near, 162; Lesueur’s leopards in, 27 [reproduction]; Lesueur’s membership of, 81, 381n1; Lesueur’s plates rediscovered in, 86, 383n55; Maclure’s biography distributed at, 374n1; Maclure’s excursions with members of, 89, 159, 161-62; Maclure’s portrait in, 24 [reproduction], 94, 160 [reproduction]; Maclure’s presidency of, 162, 392n10; members follow Owen, 182, 233; members want Lesueur in Philadelphia, 95; members work with schools, 106, 113; other portraits in library of, 88-89, 94; Ord’s portrait in, 88 [reproduction]; Owen approaches members of, 156, 182; receives Maclure’s library, 356; records of, 89; Say’s portrait in, 94 [reproduction]; Troost, founding president of, 89, 161; Troost’s portrait in, 89 [reproduction]  
*Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia Journal*: articles by Lesueur in, 93, 383n55; early diffusion of, 93-94; lithographs by Lesueur in, 122, 387n78, 387n80; not Lesueur’s preferred publication, 88, 124; objectives of, 94; photos of pages of, 86-87, 122; preface of, 86, 94; printed with Maclure’s press, 95; publication interrupted, 123; started by Maclure, 229  
*Account of the Smithsonian Institution* (Rhees), reproduction of engraving in, 355  
 Ackley, Leonard, 10  
 Adams, John Quincy, 378n89  
 Adirondack Mountains (NY), 47  
 Administrators of the Museum (Paris). *See* Professors of the Museum  
*Adventures of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn* (Twain), 284  
 Africa, 152, 155  
 African Americans, 152, 155, 245, 289. *See also* slavery; Whites  
 Agassiz, Louis, 85  
 Aigner, Christian Friedrich, 342  
 Ainslie, Hew, 296, 367  
 Albany (NY), 48, 57, 100, 103, 201, 357, 385n16; drawn by Lesueur, 45, 58  
 Albany Academy (NY), 49  
 Albion (IL), 140, 143, 145, 151; Park House in, drawn by Lesueur, 145; families from, join Owen, 143, 274  
 Alicante (Spain), 105-6, 124, 231  
 Allegheny County (PA), 194  
 Allegheny River, 194, 200, 212  
 Allegheny Mountains, 145, 212  
 Allen, William, 43, 378n98  
 Alphonse, Alexis, 191, 388n102; lithograph of, 43  
 Alphonse, Joseph, 28, 36, 42, 375n29, 386n62  
 Alsace (France), 27, 36  
 Ambridge (PA), 53  
 American Academy of Arts and Sciences (Cambridge), 81  
*American Conchology* (Say), 302, 334, 358  
 American Embassy (Paris), 25  
*American Entomology* (Say), 358, 405n15  
 American frontier: Lesueur travels to, 18, 185; New Harmony on, 11, 127, 140, 358; D. Owen’s work on, 361; in space, 362  
*American Ichthyology* (Lesueur), 94, 306, 357; reproductions of, 338-39  
*American Journal of Science and Arts* (Silliman): reproduction of *Archimedes* of Lesueur in, 290; reproduction of Lesueur and Troost’s article in, 358  
 American Museum of Natural History (New York), 353

- American Natural History* (Godman), 84-85  
*American Ornithology* (Wilson), 84, 89  
 American Philosophical Society (Philadelphia):  
     and Barton, 92, 381n1, 381n4; and  
     Jefferson, 81, 83; and Lesueur, 76, 81,  
     381n1, 381n4; and Maclure, 25, 83, 93; and  
     Ord, 12; origins of, 81; and Steinhauer, 61,  
     76; and Vaughan, 124; *Transactions* of, 84  
 American Revolution, 231. *See also* Wars of  
     Independence  
*American Science in the Age of Jefferson* (Greene),  
     81  
 American Society for Promoting and  
     Propagating Useful Knowledge  
     (Philadelphia), 81  
*American Traveller* (Tanner), reproduction of  
     Philadelphia map in, 101  
 Amsterdam (Netherlands), 62  
 Anabaptists, 52  
*Analectic Magazine* (Thomas & Maxwell), 93,  
     387n80  
*Anatomical Investigations* (Godman), 84, 382n23  
*Annales du Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle*  
     (Paris), 360  
 Anderson, Paul, drawn by Lesueur, 285  
 Anderson River (IN), 249  
 Andreae, Johann Valentin, 53  
*Angel and the Serpent* (Wilson), 152  
 Anglicans, 62  
 Antilles, 4, 25, 42, 62, 119, 192, 378n98; drawn  
     by Lesueur, 1-2, 7. *See also* Santo  
     Domingo  
 Antipodes, 3, 26, 88. *See also* Australia; Baudin  
     expedition  
*Antiques* (magazine), 122  
 Aphrodite (mythology), 223-24  
 Apollo 17 (NASA), 362  
 Appalachian Mountains, 47  
 Archives Municipales (Le Havre), 393n48  
 Archives Nationales (Paris), 179-80  
 Arcole (Italy), Battle of, 36  
 Ares (mythology), 223  
 Arkansas (state), 11, 358  
 Arkansas River, 99  
 Arkwright, Richard, 136  
 Arndt, Karl John Richard, 50, 224, 379n19,  
     389n47  
*Art de la Lithographie, ou Instruction Pratique, L'*  
     (Senefelder), 93  
 Arusmont. *See* Phiquepal d'Arusmont  
 Aschaffenburg, Karl Theodor Anton von  
     Dalberg von, 224  
 Aston, John, 139  
 Atheneum (New Harmony), xviii, 141  
 Athens (Greece), 272, 275  
 Atkinson, Eleanor Stackhouse, 249  
 Atlantic Ocean, 42, 58, 181, 254  
 Atlas (mythology), 3  
 Atwater, Caleb, 81  
 Auburn (NY), 57  
 Audubon, Jean-Jacques, 86  
 Augusta (KY), 247  
 Australia, 4, 25, 48  
 Austria, 36, 90, 177  
 Ayr (Scotland), 28, 53, 229
- B**
- Backwoods Utopias* (Bestor), 149, 375n23  
 Bacon, Francis, 21, 36, 156, 229-30, 232-33,  
     361-62, 377n64  
 Badollet, John, 14, 16, 394n12  
 Bailly, Joseph Charles, 3  
 Baker, John, 311  
 Bakewell, Benjamin, 194, 395n48, 402n2  
 Baldwin, William, 99  
 Ballston (NY), 57  
 Baltic states, 62  
 Baltimore (MD), 47  
 Bank of America Financial Center  
     (Philadelphia), 126  
 Banks, Joseph, 90  
 Baptists, 126  
 Barabino, Joseph, 394n12  
 Barnet, Isaac Cox, 25, 27-28, 42, 99  
 Barnet, William, 122  
 Barnes, John, 381n4  
 Barns, Thomas, 131  
 Barton, Benjamin Smith, 81, 83, 92  
 Barton, Mary Penington, 92  
 Barton, William Paul Crillon, 381n1, 381n4  
 Bartram, William, 81  
 BASF (Baden Aniline and Soda Factory), 113  
 Basin Harbor (VT), 58, 380n57  
 Bath (PA), 61  
 battles: of Arcole, 36; of Brandywine, 69,  
     162; of Lake Champlain, 58, 59; of  
     Monmouth, 167; of Saratoga, 57-58; of  
     Tippecanoe, 10-11; of Waterloo, 25, 27,  
     135. *See also* Wars of Independence  
 Baudin, Nicolas, 3, 25  
 Baudin expedition, 3, 25-27, 35, 48, 84, 88,  
     103, 301, 376n43  
 Bauduy, Ferdinand, 118  
 Bauduy, Victorine Elizabeth du Pont, 114-15,  
     118  
 Beal, Caroline, 191-92; drawn by Lesueur, 243  
 Beal, John, 191-92, 253-54, 263, 327; house  
     of, 327. *See also* New Harmony buildings  
     and constructions: house of David  
     Lenz  
 Beal, Rose Ann Clark, 191; drawn by Lesueur,  
     243  
 Beall, Samuel, 378n86  
 Beargrass Creek (KY), 247  
 Beaumont-en-Auge (France), 386n57  
 Beaver (PA), 233-35, 237, 239, 397n36  
 Beaver County (PA), 49, 202  
 Bedford (PA), 193  
 Belfast (Northern Ireland), 53  
 Bell, Andrew, 35, 132, 135  
 Bentel, George, 342  
 Bentham, Jeremy: Maclure's spiritual father,  
     42-43, 120, 229-230, 232; Mill's associate,  
     132; and Owen, 43, 132, 138, 161;  
     panopticon of, 42-43; philosophy of, 42-  
     43, 132, 138, 161, 378n91, 378n93; portrait  
     of, 233; publications of, 378n91  
 Berryer, Isidore, 28, 181, 376n41  
 Berthelsdorf (Germany), 62  
 Berthoud [Burgdorf] (Switzerland), 34, 36  
 Bestor, Arthur Eugene, 149, 271-72, 375n23,  
     388n1, 399n20, 400n26  
 Bethlehem (PA): botanical garden in, 74;  
     cemetery in, 74-76; common property

- in, 62, 68-69; drawn by Lesueur, 69, 71; founding of, 62; and Lehigh River, 73-75; Lesueur and Maclure visit, 54, 60-77, 161; Lesueur comments on, 75; Main Street in, 68-69, 74; map of, 60; marketplace of, 73; and Monocacy Creek, 62-63, 73-74; Moravian Church Archives in, 61, 75; Moravian Seminary for Young Ladies in, 69, 71, 73-77, 168; natural history museum in, 76; and Nazareth, 62, 74, 168, 177, 181; orchestra of, 74; photos of, 62-68, 70, 72-77. *See also* Bethlehem buildings and constructions; Moravians
- Bethlehem buildings and constructions: Bell House, 73, 77; blacksmith shop, 64-65; bridges, 63, 70-71, 73-74, 381n77; Central Moravian Church, 65, 69-71, 73-76, 381n77; colonial industrial quarter, 64-65; community store, 69; community houses, 76-77; Historic Bethlehem visitor center, 67; house of Johann Sebastian Goundie, 67-69; Luckenbach mill, 62, 72; Moravian Seminary for Young Ladies, 69, 71, 73-75, 77, 168; Old Chapel, 77; Patricia Payne Hurd Center for Music and Art, 70-71; single brethren's house, 66, 68-71, 73, 77; single sisters' house, 71, 75, 77; Sun Inn, 62, 68, 73-75, 380n57, 381n82, 381n85; tannery, 62-64, 72-73; waterworks, 65
- Bible: and church rites, 50; Lesueur inspired by, 334; Maclure authorizes use of, 119; New Harmony churchgoers use, 398n2; Owen authorizes use of, 132, 137, 398n2; Owen uses language of, 199-200; prophecies in, 52, 202, 223; Protestants must read, 34; Rapp inspired by, 53, 202; Rousseau rejects original sin in, 34; studied daily by Moravians, 73. *See also* biblical references
- biblical references: Acts of the Apostles, 51, 62, 199; Adam, 50, 51, 53, 122, 334; Apocalypse, 199, 202 (*see also* book of Revelation); apostles, 51, 53, 62, 181, 199; apostolic communism, 53, 62, 181; Babylon, 50; cherub of Eden, 334; Christ Jesus, 52, 62, 199, 223-24, 398n2; Christ's advent and millennium, 52, 155-56, 194, 199, 202, 223, 395n39; book of Daniel, 52, 395n39; book of Isaiah, 200, 395n39; book of Matthew, 395n39; book of Revelation, 52, 223, 395n39, 396n76; devil, 18, 35, 333, 334, 398n2; in drawings by Lesueur, 293, 335; Eve, 51, 122, 334; flood, 200; Garden of Eden, 12, 232, 275, 334; Gospels, 50; Kingdom of God, 52, 199, 395n39; land of milk and honey, 212; Lion of Judah, 224; Messiah, 199, 224; Moses, 11, 48, 200; Noah's ark, 200; original sin, 34, 53; paradise, 52, 152, 156, 161, 194, 200, 223, 275, 334; Prince of Peace, 200; Promised Land, 11, 52, 156, 200; Second Epistle of Peter, 199, 395n39
- Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Paris), reproduction of Saint-Simon engraving in, 232
- Bidermann, Jacques-Antoine, 118
- Big Bone Lick (KY), 82
- Bigelow, Jacob, 385n27
- Big Grave Creek (WV), 244
- Big Sandy River, drawn by Lesueur, 245
- Biography of the Signers to the Declaration of Independence* (Sanderson), 82
- Biographie Normande – M. C.-A. Lesueur* (De Ligny), 376n40
- biostratigraphic division (Cuvier and Brongniart), 48, 76, 381n81
- Birch, William, 91
- Birkbeck, Bradford, 144
- Birkbeck, George, 43, 378n98
- Birkbeck, Morris, 144-146, 274; death of, 143-44; house of, drawn by Lesueur, 144; photo of property of, 147
- Bissot, François-Marie de Vincennes, 11
- Black, John, 43, 378n98
- Black Rock (Buffalo, NY), 54
- Blacks (African Americans), 152, 155, 245, 289. *See also* slavery; Whites
- Blainville, Henry-Marie Ducrotay de, 224
- Blooming Grove (PA), 379n21
- Bloomington (IN), 353
- Blue Mountain Ridge (PA), 73, 75, 168
- Blythe, James, 93
- Boat Load of Knowledge*, 193, 200-201, 233, 249, 395n48. *See also* *Philanthropist* (keelboat)
- Bodmer, Karl, engraving of Lesueur by, 305; watercolor of Lesueur by, 348
- Bohemia (Czechia), 62
- Böhm, Eusebius, 55, 258
- Böhme, Jakob, 50-51, 53
- Bonaparte, Charles-Lucien, 383n40
- Bonaparte, Charlotte, 113
- Bonaparte, Joseph, 113, 383n40
- Bonaparte, Napoleon, 11, 25-27, 34, 37-38, 41, 52, 113, 374n10, 375n24, 375n25, 377n69, 377n85
- Bonaparte, Zénaïde, 113
- Bonebank (Mount Vernon, IN), 186, 296-301; Lesueur's drawing of, 298; photos of, 187, 299; pottery of, 300-1
- Bonnemains, Jacqueline, 4, 104, 375n25, 401n54. *See also* Acknowledgments
- Bonpas Creek (IL), 144
- Bordentown (NJ), 113
- Bosson, Thomas S., 271, 367
- Boston (MA), 28, 38, 58, 77, 103, 119, 386n61
- Boston Society of Natural History, 385n27
- Boullanger, Charles-Pierre, 3
- Boundary Commission (USA-Canada), 48, 103. *See also* under Canada
- Bourbon, House of, 26
- Bowditch, Nathaniel, 81
- Bowring, John, 43, 378n98
- Boyhood of Lincoln* (Atkinson), 249
- Brandywine, Battle of, 69, 162
- Brandywine Creek, 114, 117-19, 162; drawing of, 115; photo of, 118
- Brattleboro (VT), 380n57
- Breton Mine (Potosi, MO), 301
- British and Foreign School Society (London), 137
- British Isles. *See* Great Britain
- Brittany (France), 38
- Broad Mountain (PA), 167
- Bröleman, Georges Auguste, 394n17
- Brongniart, Alexandre, 48, 76, 100, 381n81

Brotherhood of Cootehill (Ireland), 53. *See also* Moravians  
 Brown, Paul, 275, 328, 400n23, 403n22  
 Brown, Samuel, 93  
 Brown University Library (RI), reproduction of *APS Transactions* from, 84  
 Bruce, Archibald, 81  
 Bruni d'Entrecasteaux, Antoine Reymond Joseph de, 25  
*Bryozoa*, 290, 361  
 Buffalo (NY), 54  
 Burgdorf [Berthoud] (Switzerland), 34, 37  
 Burgess, Charles, 403n60  
 Burgoyne, John, 57  
 Buss, Johann Christoph, 37  
 Buss, Luise (Mrs. Joseph Neef), 37, 41, 295, 315, 329  
 Butaud, Isaac, 383n55  
 Blucher (Lesueur's dog), 305  
 Butler County (PA), 49, 54

## C

Cadmos (mythology), 223-24, 334  
 Cairo (IL), 280; drawn by Lesueur, 284  
 Caldwell, John, 53  
 California (state), 21  
 Calvinists, 62  
 Canada, 11-12, 54, 57, 358, 395n51; Lesueur determines boundary of, 48-49, 103, 201, 357, 385n16  
 Canandaigua Lake (NY), 57  
 Cap de la Hève (France), 410-11, 464  
 Cape Cod (MA), 58  
 Cape of Good Hope (South Africa), 259  
 Captina Island (Ohio River), 189  
 Carmalt, James, 162  
 Carmi (IL), 151  
 Carmony, Donald, 149  
 Carson, John, 322, 329, 331  
 Catholics, 10, 41, 61, 105-106  
 Catskill Mountains (NY), 58, 93  
 Cave-in-Rock (IL), 351  
 Cavalier de La Salle, Robert-René, 11, 201  
 Cavett, Andrew [associate judge], 322

Cayuga (NY), 57  
 Cayuga Lake (NY), 48, 57  
 cemeteries (historical): in Bethlehem, 74-76; of Bonebank, 296, 298-299; near Fort Saint George, 57; in New Harmony, 144, 260, 271, 296, 302-3, 309, 399n15, 402n20; of Wanborough, 147  
 Central Park (New York), 353  
 Centre Historique des Archives Nationales (Paris), 179-80  
 Cernan, Eugene, 362-65  
 Chamber of Deputies (France), 231  
 Chambersburg (PA), 193  
 Champlain, Lake (VT): Battle of, near Plattsburgh (NY), 58; drawn by Lesueur, 57, 59; Lesueur and Maclure cross, 58, 380n57  
 Chappellsmith, John, 105, 138  
*Charles-Alexandre Lesueur en Amérique du Nord* (Bonnemains), 4  
 Charlestown (IN), 248  
 Charlottesville (VA), 83  
 Charlton (England), 28-29  
 Chastenay, Louise-Marie-Victoire (*pseud.* Victorine) de Lanty de, 193, 395n21  
 Chesapeake Bay, 12  
 Chester (MA), 58  
 Chorlton Twist Company, 131  
 Chouans (France), 38  
 Chrétien, Gilles-Louis (engraver), 372  
 Christ Church (Philadelphia), drawn by Lesueur, 79, 91, 97  
 Christ Jesus, 52, 62, 199, 223-24, 398n2. *See also under* biblical references; Christians  
 Christ's Thousand-Year Reign. *See* Millennium  
*Christianapolis* (Andreae), 53  
 Christians: in *Christianapolis*, 62; Jesus's disciples, 73; Moravian example for, 73, 76; Maclure's opinion on, 139; millennial hopes of, 156, 199; Owen's attacks on, 135; Rapp's "Christian perfection," 202  
 Church of Scotland, 132, 135  
 Cincinnati (OH): drawn by Lesueur, 242; *Philanthropist* in, 200, 240, 242-43, 245, 248; utopians from, 152, 276, 279-80; Western

Museum in, 202  
 Civil War, 273  
 Clark, William, 83-84, 100, 201-2  
 Clark's Indian Museum (St. Louis), 83, 382n19  
 Clark County (OH), 246  
 Clarke, John M., 48  
 Clarksville (OH), 246  
 Cleveland Museum of Art (OH), 401n52  
 Clifford, John D., 93  
 Clinton, DeWitt, 54, 57  
 Coast and Interior Survey (Washington, DC), 353  
 Cohoes (NY), 57  
 Cole, George Douglas Howard, 388n1  
 Cole, Margaret, 388n1  
 Collège de France (Paris), 3  
 Collège du Havre, 376n37, 386n57  
 Columbia (PA), 177  
 Combe, Abram, 139  
 Comenius, Johann Amos, 33-34, 62, 376n46  
 Commerce (MO), drawn by Lesueur, 288  
 Committee of Public Instruction (Paris), 230  
 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. *See* Pennsylvania  
 communism. *See* Bible: apostolic communism  
 communitarian socialism: definition of, 127, 135; and Fourierism, 156, 232; and Lesueur, 18, 179, 181-82, 185; in Bethlehem, 177; in Nazareth, 161, 177; in New Harmony, 152, 316, 362; of Shakers, 58  
 Community houses numbers 1 to 5 (New Harmony). *See* Number One to Five  
 Comte, Auguste, 231-32, 397n15  
 Condemine, Marie-Anne Aimée (Mrs. Sigoigne), 97, 113, 386n50  
 Condé-sur-Vesgre (France), 229  
 Condillac, Etienne Bonnot de, 34, 37, 105, 119, 230  
 Connecticut River, 58, 380n57  
 Connoquenessing Creek (PA), 50  
 Conrad, Timothy, 360  
 Considerant, Victor Prosper, 229  
 Constantine (emperor), 395n39  
 Consulate of France (USA), 100, 102, 180,

182, 185  
 Cooper, Thomas, 93  
 Cooperating Society of Allegheny County (Pittsburgh), 194  
 Cootehill (Ireland), 53  
 Corgan, James X., 358, 361  
 Count de Léon (Bernhard Müller), 224-25  
 Counter-Reformation, 62  
 Crawford, William Harris, 42, 378n89  
 Creator. *See* God  
 Crown Point (NY), 57-58  
 Crystal City (MO), 289  
 Cullock [*sic*]. *See* Kellogg, Charles Fraser  
 Cumberland River, 287, 334  
 Cut-off Island (Wabash), 259, 268-69, 359. *See also under* New Harmony  
 Cuvier, Frédéric, 18, 99-100, 230, 373n17, 384n7  
 Cuvier, Georges, 3, 26, 48, 76, 224, 361, 373n17  
 Cygogne [*sic*]. *See* Condemine, Marie-Anne Aimée  
 Cynthiaiana (IN), 151

## D

D'Arusmont. *See* Piquetal d'Arusmont  
 Dakota Territory, 11  
 Dalberg von Aschaffenburg, Karl Theodor Anton von, 224  
 Dale, Ann Caroline (Mrs. Robert Owen), 131  
 Dale, David (Robert Owen's father-in-law), 131-32  
 Danke, Franz, 176  
 Davis, Edwin Hamilton, 301  
 Davy, Humphrey, 23  
 Day, Richard, 10, 14-15; Wabash photo by, 15  
 Dean's Academy for Young Ladies (M. & J. Dean), 125  
 Declaration of Independence (USA), 79, 82. *See also* Wars of Independence  
 De Gérando, Marie-Joseph, 230  
 Delaware County (PA), 41  
 Delaware River, 118, 168; drawn by Lesueur, 98

De Ligny, Alexandre Daniel Hurault de Gondrecourt, 376n40  
 D'Entrecasteaux. *See* Bruni d'Entrecasteaux  
 Depuch, Louis, 3  
*Descriptions of the Shells of North America* (Say), 302, 334, 358  
*Descriptions of the Insects of North America* (Say), 358, 405n15  
 Desmarest, Anselme Gaëtan, 87, 124, 382n31; Lesueur's letters to, 87, 89, 100, 103, 113, 124, 334, 383n58, 384n2, 384n9, 384n10, 385n16, 385n20, 387n83, 388n97  
 Despaigne, Marie Claudine Laurette (Mrs. Jean-Baptiste Grelaud), 97, 113, 386n50  
 Detroit (MI), 83  
*Development of the Principles and Plans on Which to Establish Self-Supporting Home Colonies* (Robert Owen), 155  
 DeWitt, Simeon, 57  
 DeWitt Clinton, 54, 57  
 Dieppe (France), 28  
 Directory [French: Directoire] (Paris), 230  
*Disseminator of Useful Knowledge* (Maclure et al.), 337, 404n68  
 Dobson, Thomas, 93  
*Documentary History of the Harmonist Society* (Arndt), 50  
 Dolce, Ludovico, 224  
 Domaine, Adrien, 386n57  
 Donnachie, Ian, 138, 388n1  
 Doolittle, Isaac, 122  
 Dorfeuille, Joseph, 201-2, 240, 395n54  
 Dorsey, John Syng, 381n4  
 Dorsey, James M., 399n15  
 Doskey, John S., 104, 378n98, 391n4  
 Douglas, Paul, 396n75  
 Doylestown (PA), 177  
 Drexel University (Philadelphia, PA), 85, 94  
 Drinkwater, Peter, 131  
 Duchesne, Joseph, 385n27  
 Duclos, Pierre, 162, 192  
 Duclos, Victor, 162, 192, 259, 394n2, 404n70  
 Dufour, Amélie, 191, 388n102; lithograph of, 43  
 Duménil, André Marie Constant, 100

Dupalais, André (Virginia's younger brother), 191-92, 239, 248, 254  
 Du Palais de Guémar, Pierre Alexandre Poulard (Virginia's father), 191  
 Dupalais, Victor (Virginia's youngest brother), 191, 193, 239, 248  
 Dupalais, Virginia Poulard (Mrs. William Twigg): drawn by Lesueur, 201, 243; draws F. Wright, 306; draws like Lesueur, 330; Fretageot assisted by, 191; granddaughter's note about, 192-93, 394n19; illness of, 239; Lesueur lives with, 338, 394n19, 400n32; Lesueur, "uncle" of, 191, 394n9, 394n19; Lesueur's protégée, 191, 200, 254, 306, 330; and maid called Eugénie, 200, 394n12; on *Philanthropist*, 191-93, 201, 239, 243, 248, 253-54, 397n36; siblings and parents of, 191-92; witness for Louisa Neef, 306  
 Duplanty, McCall and Co., 118  
 Du Ponceau, Peter Stephen (Pierre-Étienne), 81, 381n4  
 Du Pont, Alexis Irénée, 118  
 Du Pont, Alfred Victor, 115, 118  
 Du Pont, Eleuthera (Mrs. Thomas McKie Smith), 114-15, 118  
 Du Pont, Eleuthère Irénée, 117-18; house of, drawn by Lesueur, 115, 120  
 Du Pont, Evelina Gabrielle (Mrs. Jacques-Antoine Bidermann), 115, 118  
 Du Pont, Henry, 114, 118  
 Du Pont, Julia Sophie Angélique (Mrs. Irvine Shubrick), 114  
 Du Pont, Pierre Samuel, 117  
 Du Pont, Sophie Madeleine (Mrs. Samuel Francis du Pont), [115], 118  
 Du Pont, Victor Marie, 116-17; house of, drawn by Lesueur, 116; photo of house of, 117  
 Du Pont, Victorine Elizabeth (Mrs. Ferdinand Bauduy), 114-15, 118  
 DuPont. *See* E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company  
 Dupuis, Serge, 388n1  
*Durch Zerfallene Kirchen Fenster* (Müller), 209

- E**
- Earth (planet): Christ's return on, 52, 199; conference on bowels of, 240; harbors Nature's secrets, 232; in mythology, 3; origin and shape of, 47-48, 240, 245, 362; paradise on, 52, 156, 161, 194, 334; USA, best field of experiment on, 161
- East Combe (Greenwich), drawn by Lesueur, 29
- Easton (PA), 168, 177, 185
- Eaton, Amos, 48-49, 57, 81, 357
- Eckhardt, George C., 122
- École des Mines (Paris), 392n39
- École Polytechnique (Paris), 122
- École Publique de Mathématique et d'Hydrographie (Le Havre), 48, 386n57
- École Vétérinaire d'Alfort (Maisons-Alfort, France), 382n31
- Economy (Ambridge, PA): animal park in, 213; archives of, 53, 93, 203; botanical garden in, 213, 218, 221-23, 396n74; Count de Leon visits, 224; description of, 209, 212-13, 223; drawn by Lesueur, 212-13, 216-17; founding of, 202; Lesueur and Maclure visit, 54, 202, 224; Maclure's opinion on, 209, 212; map of, 203; meaning of name, 202; orchestra of, 209, 213; Owen sends son to, 321; Owen visits, 202; *Philanthropist* trapped near, 202; photos of, 204-15, 218-23; silk production in, 202; statue of Harmony (*see* Harmony); wine production in, 212, 215, 223; seceding Harmonists leave, 225; *William Penn* transports Harmonists to, 225. *See also* Harmonists
- Economy buildings and constructions: bakery, 216; barn, 205, 217; brewery, 213, 217; cabinet maker's shop, 205, 217; churches, 209, 213, 217; cotton mill, 216; distillery, 213; dye-house, 212; factories, 209, 212-13, 216; feast hall, 215; flour mill, 213; granary, 211, 214; Great House, 208-9, 212-13, 217, 219-20, 223; greenhouse, 223; Harmony's temple and garden, 218, 221-23; house of David Lenz, 207, 217; house of Frederick Rapp, 213, 217; house of George Rapp, 208, 212-13, 217; houses, 204, 206, 209, 213, 216-17; log cabins, 209; natural history museum, 209, 215; paint shop, 217; pottery, 217; school, 209; shoe shop, 210, 218; stable, 204, 216; store, 210, 213, 218; tailor shop, 210, 218; tavern, 212, 216; vineyard, 223; warehouse, 209, 211, 214, 217; water pump, 214; wheelwright, 217; wool factory, 216; workshops, 209, 213
- Economy street names: Church Street, 203-6, 208, 215; East Street (Merchant Street), 203, 216; Main Street (14<sup>th</sup>), 203, 206-7, 216-17; Mill Street (15<sup>th</sup>), 203, 217; North Street (16<sup>th</sup>), 203; Pitt Street (13<sup>th</sup>), 203-4, 217; South Street (12<sup>th</sup>), 203; West Street (65<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Memorial Highway), 203
- Eddy, Thomas, 57
- Eden, Garden of, 12, 232, 275, 334. *See also* biblical references
- Eden, Samuel, 377n77
- Edgeworth, Maria, 132
- Edinburgh (Scotland), 131, 233
- Education Society. *See* New Harmony Education Society
- E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company, 113, 118
- Elba, Island of (Italy), 41, 377n85
- Ellicott, Andrew, 81, 83
- Elliott, John, 394n19
- Elliott, Josephine Mirabella, 104, 149, 248, 375n23, 377n85, 388n1, 389n47, 394n19, 400n32. *See also* Dedication
- Ellis, Jabez, 28
- Elston, Thomas, 368, 371
- Emancipation Proclamations* (Lincoln), 391n86
- Emile, or, On Education* (Rousseau), 34, 376n47
- Encyclopédie, L'* (Diderot & D'Alembert), 376n47
- Endersbach (Germany), 209
- England: Lesueur and Maclure visit, 28-33, 42-43, 90, 375n29; Lesueur's drawings of, 23, 28-30, 32; Maclure visits schools in, 124; Moravians in, 62; Owen about prices in, 149; Owen returns to, 161, 332, 337; Pestalozzian schools in, 43, 127; revivalism in, 199; USA threatened by, 82-83. *See also* Great-Britain
- English Prairie (IL), 143, 146-47, 274. *See also* Albion, Wanborough
- Enlightenment, 47, 135
- Entrecasteaux. *See* Bruni d'Entrecasteaux
- Ephrata (Nazareth), 168
- Epimetheus (mythology), 3, 17, 200
- Erie (PA), 47, 54
- Erie Canal, 48, 54, 57-58, 61, 354
- Erie, Lake, 54, 376n43
- Eskimos [Inuit, Iñupiat, Yupik people], 234
- Essonne (France), 117
- Eugénie (Lesueur's maid), 191, 200, 239, 248, 394n12
- Europe: archives in, 21; Central Europe, 62; Lancasterian schools in, 105, 229; Lesueur's articles hardly read in, 86; Lesueur too long away from, 349; lithography in, 121; Maclure's collections from, 353, 356; Maclure's schools fail in, 161; Maclure's travels in, 25, 82, 95, 104-5; Moravians in, 62, 73, 168, 177; D. D. Owen studies in, 358; travelers from, in America, 11, 201, 246; A. Wilson not published in, 89. *See also* England; France; Germany; Great-Britain; Ireland; Italy; Netherlands; Poland; Russia; Scotland; Spain; Switzerland
- European Journals of Maclure* (Doskey), 378n98
- Eusebius (bishop of Caesarea), 395n39
- Études sur la Vie et les Travaux de J. H. Pestalozzi (Pompée), 375n23, 375n24, 377n69
- Evans, Oliver, Jr., 378n86
- Evansville (IN), 151, 259
- Eveleth, Lydia E., 321
- Ewell Sale Stewart Library (ANSP), 24, 88-89, 94
- Exeter (England), 127
- Eyre family (Philadelphia), 97, 113

## F

- Falls Bridge (East Falls), 39  
 Falque, Charles, 191, 388n102; lithograph of, 43  
 Far West. *See* American frontier  
*Fauna Americana* (Harlan), 84  
 Faure, Pierre Ange François-Xavier, 3  
 Fellenberg, Philipp Emanuel von, 137  
 Ferdinand VII (king), 106  
 Ferriar, John, 131  
 Feuerbach (Germany), 379n21  
 Finlay, Kirkman, 136  
 First Republic (France), 38  
 fish (Lesueur), 25, 86, 95, 194, 305, 357, 387n80; articles on, 54, 76, 86, 93, 122, 380n42, 381n83, 387n78; book on, 81, 86, 93, 306, 334, 338-39, 358, 404n78; hand-colored engraving of, 339; lithographs of, 122  
 Fisher, Hannah (Mrs. William Price), 191, 234, 240, 248, 253; drawn by Lesueur, 243  
 Fisher, Helen Gregoroffsky (widow of Miers Fisher, Jr.), 191, 240, 254  
 Flatboats (Lesueur), 241, 244, 246, 284-85, 297  
 Florida (USA), 89, 99, 384n2, 384n9  
 Flower, Elizabeth, 145  
 Flower, George, 144-45, 391n4  
 Flower, Richard, 140, 143, 150, 161, 391n4; house of, drawn by Lesueur, 145  
 Fort Ann (NY), 57  
 Fort Duquesne (Pittsburgh), 194; drawn by Lesueur, 196-97  
 Fort George (NY), 57-58; drawn by Lesueur, 58  
 Fort Knox (Vincennes), 14  
 Fort Niagara (NY), 54  
 Fort Pitt (Pittsburgh), 194; drawn by Lesueur, 196-97  
 Fort Washington (PA), 109  
 fossils (Lesueur), 89, 464; illustrations of, 290, 360, 411  
 Founding Fathers (USA), 82, 127. *See also* Wars of Independence  
 Fourier, Charles, 156, 229, 232  
 Fourierism, 156  
 Fournier, Simon-Pierre, II, portrait of Maclure by, 372  
 Fowler, Samuel, 178  
 Fox, Charles, engraving of Bentham by, 233  
 Fox River (IL), photo of, 186  
 France: anti-democratic developments in, 124; Baudin expedition returns to, 3, 25-26; bureaucracy in, 81; colonial possessions of, 11, 54, 83, 194, 395n51; Du Pont machinery brought from, 117; Du Ponts flee from, 117; explorers in America from, 11-12; Fretageot in police of, 317; Fretageot returns to, 349; Lesueur almost not published in, 87, 124; Lesueur and Maclure depart from, 25-26, 77, 87, 119, 185-86, 464; Lesueur asks for help from, 99-100, 180; Lesueur decides not to return to, 193; Lesueur funded by, 100, 103, 123, 162, 182, 384n64, 385n16, 385n18; Lesueur intends to return to, 17, 103, 124, 161-62, 178, 349, 400n32, 403n57; Lesueur little aided by, 85-86, 100, 103, 124; Lesueur prefers to be published in, 87-88, 179, 181-82; Lesueur returns to, 353, 357; Lesueur's relation with, 99, 123-24; Lesueur's travels in, 4; lithography in, 43, 90, 387n83; Maclure informs Jefferson about, 82; Maclure returns to, 94, 124; Maclure's brother imprisoned in, 33; Maclure's collections from, 353; Maclure's connections with, 26-27; Maclure's projects in, 47; Maclure's school in, 131; Maclure's travels in, 104; Michaux called back by ambassador of, 83; Neef joins army in, 36; Neef's school in, 37, 375n23, 375n24; Schär's departure from, 119, 375n29, 386n62; Spain invaded by, 106; Switzerland invaded by, 34; Useful Knowledge not likely to spread in, 36; USA aided by, 167; USA negotiates with, 26-27; utopian philosophers in, 229-32  
 Frankford (PA), 386n50  
 Franklin, Benjamin, 81  
 Franklin (NJ), 61, 177-78, 185  
 Franklin Mines (NJ), 61, 178, 185  
 Frazer, James, 192, 240  
 French and Indian War, 169  
 French Empire, 26-27  
 French Institute (Paris). *See* Institut de France  
 French Revolution, 36, 38, 105, 117, 199, 230  
 Fretageot, Achille(s) Emery, 106, 191-93, 295, 386n49, 388n102, 394n17; lithograph of, 43  
 Fretageot, Joseph, 386n49  
 Fretageot, Marie Louise Duclos: arrives in New Harmony, 254; arrives in Philadelphia, 106, 121, 386n47; becomes all powerful, 338; blamed for lack of authority, 317; called "Bad Genius," 349; called "queen," 331, 338, 404n71; called "soubrette," 331; capable teacher, 120, 182, 245; conflict with educators, 306, 315, 329-31; controversial reputation of, 317; deviates from the truth, 317; *Disseminator* published by, 337; drawn by Chappellsmith, 105, 320; drawn by Lesueur, 201, 236-37, 243, 293, 316-17, 329, 332-35; excommunicated by Education Society, 315, 403n22; and French police rumor, 317; Lesueur convinced by, to follow Owen, 185, 349; Lesueur dislikes, 334, 349; Lesueur helped by, 121; Lesueur's conflict with, 338; Lesueur's fears explained by, 181; Lesueur's mail handled by, 121, 376n36, 387n94; Lesueur's work with, 106, 119, 121, 123, 162, 338; lives in Maclure's house, 106; lives in Number Five, 275, 294, 328; Maclure convinced by, to follow Owen, 162, 182; Maclure meets, 106; Maclure's correspondence with, 119-21, 181, 231, 315, 377n75, 377n85, 386n47, 386n61, 390n70, 392n23, 393n1, 401n45, 404n78; Maclure sends, to Philadelphia, 104; Maclure's estate supervised by, 338; Maclure's liaison with, 331; Maclure's trip with, to Beaver, 234, 237; Neef accused by, 306; Neef accuses, 321, 330;

Fretageot, Marie Louise Duclos (*continued*):  
 nephews of, 162; nursing skills of, 239,  
 332-33; Owen at home of, 167, 182;  
 Owen founds new school with, 315, 318-  
 19, 328-29; Owen protected by, 329; and  
 Pestalozzi, 120; on *Philanthropist*, 191, 200,  
 229, 234, 248, 253; Piquepal assisted by,  
 in school, 106, 120; portrait of, 316, 406;  
 returns to France, 349, 404n68; rudeness  
 of, 317; school of, in Filbert Street drawn  
 by Lesueur, 107; school of, on Ridge  
 Road drawn by Lesueur, 183-84, 387n87;  
 school of, in New Harmony, 315, 317,  
 329, 332, 337, 349, 404n78; school of, in  
 Philadelphia, 106, 123-24, 167, 182-84,  
 254; school of, moved to Ridge Road,  
 123; school opened with Owen, 315, 318-  
 19, 328-29; students of, 123, 161, 315,  
 328; teaches children aged two to five,  
 277; teaches in the Hall, 317; teaches in  
 Number Five, 277, 318; teaches in the  
 shoe factory, 317; Troost accuses, 330-31  
 Fretageot, Mary Alexander, 394n17  
 Fretageot, Nora Chadwick, 412  
 Freycinet, Louis Claude de Saulces de, 27  
 Frick, Adrian, 42  
 Friedensburg (PA), 167  
 Friendly Association of Mutual Interests (PA),  
 167  
 Fröbel, Friedrich, 35

## G

Gallatin, Albert, 81  
 Gallipolis (OH), drawn by Lesueur, 245  
 Galt, Norbourn, 378n86  
 Geddes, James, 57  
 Genessee River, 54  
 Geneva (NY), 57  
 Geneva (Switzerland), 376n47  
 Gentryville (IN), 249  
*Geological and Agricultural Survey of the District  
 Adjoining the Erie Canal* (Eaton), 48  
*Geological Sciences in the Antebellum South*

(Corgan), 361  
 George, Lake (NY), 57  
 George (runaway slave), 246  
 Georgia (USA), 61  
 Gérando, Marie-Joseph de, 230  
 Germantown (PA), 106, 108-13, 119  
 Germantown (TN), 307  
 Germantown Public School (Philadelphia),  
 106, 109, 113, 119; drawn by Lesueur, 108;  
 photo of, 109  
 Germany, 49-50, 54, 202, 224, 260, 353  
 Gibbs, George, 93  
 Gilbert, Joseph, 296, 368  
 Gilliams, Jacob, 387n94  
 Gilmore, Patrick, 368, 402n2  
 Gilpin, Elizabeth (Mrs. Matthew Maury), 114  
 Gilpin, Sarah Lydia, 114  
 Glasgow (Scotland), 28, 43, 131, 135-36, 139,  
 392n39  
 Glasgow Mechanics' Institute, 43  
 Glens Falls (NY), 57  
 Gnadenfeld (Pawlowiczki, Poland), 168  
 Gnadenstadt (PA), 169  
 God (Creator): Adam created by, 50-  
 51; communal living intended by, 53;  
 interference of, in human affairs, 52,  
 161; Lesueur says "God bless my soul",  
 305; Lesueur studies works of, 181; man  
 created in image of, 50; Rapp believed to  
 be sent by, 54  
 Godman, John, 81, 84  
 gods (mythology), 3, 224, 334  
 Godwin, William, 132, 135  
 Goode, George Brown, 357-58, 405n13  
 Goodlet, James R. E. [presiding judge], 322  
 Goodman, Charles, 381n10  
 Google Earth, reproduction of map of New  
 Harmony, 20-21  
 Gotô, Shigeru, 388n1  
 Goundie, Johann Sebastian, 67-69  
 Gouverneur Morris, 57  
 Grace Church (New York), 354  
 Graff, Jacob, 79-80, 82; house of, drawn by  
 Lesueur, 79; photo of house of, 80

Graham, John, 225  
 granary (New Harmony). *See* New Harmony  
 granary  
 Grass Dear Creek [*sic*]. *See* Beargrass Creek  
 Gratz, Mr. (keelboat owner), 297  
 Gray, John, 167  
 Great Britain: Jefferson prohibits exports  
 to, 132; Lesueur and Maclure's travels  
 in, 4, 28-33, 42-43, 375n29; Maclure's  
 collections from, 353; Maclure's family in,  
 28-29, 33; Maclure's last trip through, 124,  
 127, 139; Moravians in, 53. *See also*  
 England; Scotland; Wales  
 Great Lakes (USA), 11. *See also* Erie, Lake;  
 Michigan, Lake; Ontario, Lake;  
 Superior, Lake  
 Great Northwest (USA), 353  
 Great Western Canal, 57, 61, 354  
 Greaves, James Pierrepont, 43, 378n98  
 Greek mythology, 3, 17, 223-24, 334  
 Greene, John C., 81-82, 86, 240  
 Greenfield (MA), 380n57  
 Greensburg (PA), 193  
 Greenwich (England), 28; drawn by Lesueur,  
 29-30, 32  
 Gregoroffsky, Helen (widow of Miers Fisher,  
 Jr.), 191, 240, 254  
 Grelaud's Female Seminary (Philadelphia), 97,  
 113, 386n50. *See also* Despaigne, Marie  
 Claudine Laurette  
 Gresham Creek (New Harmony), 274  
 Gribayedoff, Valerian Michaelovich: portrait  
 of Lesueur by, 420  
 Grimshaw's Ladies' Seminary (Philadelphia),  
 97, 113, 386n50. *See also* Milligan, Harriet  
 Elizabeth  
 Grouseland (Vincennes, IN): drawn by  
 Lesueur, 16; photo of, 17  
 Guadeloupe (Lesser Antilles): drawn by  
 Lesueur, 1  
 Gulf of Mexico, 11, 25, 395n54; Lesueur  
 wants to visit, 95, 99, 103, 179-180, 186  
 Gutek, Gerald Lee, 375n23, 377n85



## H

- Hagley Museum and Library (Wilmington):  
 photos of, 114, 117-18, 120; reproduction of Lesueur's calling card from, 33;
- Haines, Reuben, III: ANSP secretary, 381n1; house of, drawn by Lesueur, 111; Lesueur and Maclure's excursion with, 162, 178; Lesueur asks help from, 404n77; Lesueur works with, 123; Maclure's commercial agent, 112; Maclure's letters to, 185, 209, 375n23, 376n45, 377n85; photos of house of, 110, 112; photo of school of, 109; school of, 106, 109, 113, 119; school of, drawn by Lesueur, 108
- Haines family (Germantown), 112
- Haiti, 307, 394n20
- Hall, William: journal of, 390n65, 390n76; tavern of, drawn by Lesueur, 143, 146
- Haller, Frederick Conrad, 379n21
- Haller, Karl Ludwig von, 375n24
- Hampshire (England), 139
- Hamy, Ernest-Théodore, 12, 17, 26, 179-81, 248, 254, 366, 376n42, 398n53, 401n54
- Hanks, Dennis Friend, 249
- Hare, Robert, 81
- Hare, Sarah Emlen, 114
- Harlan, Richard, 81, 84
- Harlow Lindley Collection (IHS), 182
- Harmonie (German spelling), 50, 52, 140
- Harmonists: Arndt studies, 50, 224, 379n19; arrive in USA, 50, 202, 379n21; build Economy, 202, 209, 212, 213; build Harmony, 50, 202, 213; build New Harmony, 11, 50, 52, 202; called Rappites, 50; Christian perfection of, 202; commerce with other communes, 202; and common property, 51, 53; dissension of, 51, 225, 379n21; early history of, 50; fuel break between Owen and Maclure, 50, 321; help free the *Philanthropist*, 213; legal arbitration for seceding, 51; Maclure's opinion on, 51-54, 209, 212; move to Economy, 202, 225; move to New Harmony, 52, 202; new arrivals of, in USA, 51, 202; private property registers destroyed by, 51; publications about, 50, 379n19; religious beliefs of (*see* Rapp, Johann Georg[e]: religious beliefs of); rich and poor, 51; schism of, 224-25; sexual intercourse of, 202; wear traditional dress, 213. *See also* Economy; Harmony
- Harmony Society; New Harmony; Rapp, Johann Georg(e)
- Harmony (mythology), 3, 223-24, 334, 396n75; photos of, 222-23
- Harmony (PA): buildings and constructions of, 49, 50-52, 54; Harmonists have left, 52, 202, 213, 379n21; Lesueur and Maclure visit, 49-54; Maclure's opinion on, 51-54, 209; map of, 55; photos of, 50-52; sold to Ziegler, 52
- Harmony Museum (PA), 51
- Harmony Society* (Knoedler), 149
- Harmony Society (Rapp), 50, 52-53, 223-24, 275. *See also* Harmonists
- Harper Tavern (PA), 167
- Harris, Thaddeus William, 87
- Harrisburg (PA), 193; drawn by Lesueur, 195
- Harrison, John Fletcher Clews, 199, 388n1
- Harrison, William Henry, 10-11; house of, drawn by Lesueur, 16; photo of house of, 17
- Hart, Patrick, 28, 82
- Harvard College (Cambridge), 87, 119
- Harvard Medical School (Cambridge), 177
- Havre, Le (France). *See* Le Havre
- Hawkins, Harry Hayden, 151
- Hays, Isaac, 193
- Helderberg Escarpment (NY), 48
- Helvetic Republic, 34, 375n24. *See also* Switzerland
- Hemphill, Marie-Louise Loir, 25-26, 375n31
- Henning, Hotorias, 129, 400n32. *See also* Neef-Lesueur House
- Henry, Thomas, 131
- Henry, William, 173
- Hentz, Marcellin, 103, 119, 385n26
- Hephaestus (mythology), 3, 223
- Herder, Johann Gottfried, 379n36
- Herring, William, 254
- Herrnhut (Germany), 73
- Heyer, Jean-Pierre, 394n20
- Heyre [*sic*]. *See* Eyre family
- Hills, Stephen, 195
- Historical Society of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia), reproduction of Lesueur's "Number Five" from, 341
- Historic New Harmony – Official Guide* (Fretageot & Mangrum), reproductions from: Fretageot's portrait, 406; Harmonist brick church, 412; Schnee's labyrinth, 430
- Historic New Harmony, reproductions of Chappellsmith's silhouettes from: Lesueur and Fretageot, 105; Robert Owen, 138
- History of American Socialisms* (Noyes), 156
- History of the Pestalozzian Movement in the United States* (Monroe), 375n23
- Hobart of Buckinghamshire, Eleanor Agnes, 29
- Holland (Netherlands), 57, 62
- Holyoke, George J., 388n1
- Homer (poet), 224
- House of Commons (Great Britain), 135
- Howe, William, 162
- How Gertrude Teaches Her Children* (Pestalozzi), 34
- Hudson River, 54, 57-58
- Hudson Valley, 57-58
- Hughes, Isabella, 97, 113, 386n50
- Hume, David, 120, 131, 229-30
- Hunt, G., reproduction of New Lanark engraving by, 134
- Hunter, Ann (Maclure's niece), 28
- Hunter, David, Jr. (Maclure's nephew), 28
- Hunter, David, Sr. (Maclure's brother-in-law), 28-29, 33
- Hunter, George (Maclure's nephew), 28, 127, 375n29
- Hunter, Helen (Maclure's niece), 28
- Hunter, Helen McClure (Maclure's sister), 28-29, 33

Hunter, Jessie (Maclure's niece), 28  
 Hunter, Percival (Maclure's nephew), 28  
 Hus, Jan, 61

## I

Iapetus (mythology), 3  
 Iberian Peninsula, 104, 106. *See also* Spain  
 Ideologues (France), 230  
 Ifferten (Switzerland). *See* Yverdon  
 Illinois (Indians), 11. *See also* Indians  
 Illinois (state): Flower owns land in, 140;  
     former part of Indiana Territory, 11; Hall's  
     tavern in, 143; Lesueur surveys in, 357;  
     Lesueur travels to, 280, 289; David Dale  
     Owen surveys in, 353, 358; Robert Owen  
     buys land in, 150-51, 390n70; prairies of,  
     11, 259  
 Indiana (state): early history, 11-12; Eden in,  
     12, 275, 334; Harmonists settle in, 50, 52;  
     Lesueur and prehistory of, 296, 298-302;  
     Lesueur's reasons to go to, 12, 17, 106,  
     161, 179-82, 185-86, 338, 349; Lesueur's  
     training of geologists in, 357; Maclure  
     decides to go to, 182; Cecilia Noël also to  
     go to, 191-93; no slavery in, 246; David  
     Dale Owen, state geologist of, 358;  
     Richard Owen, state geologist of, 361;  
     Robert Owen moves to, 131, 137, 139,  
     150; Robert Dale Owen enters legislature  
     of, 354  
 Indiana Academy of Sciences (Indianapolis),  
     84  
*Indiana Decade of the Harmonist Society* (Arndt),  
     50  
 Indiana Historical Society (Indianapolis), 4,  
     94-95, 162, 182, 185; reproduction of  
     New Harmony map from, 267  
 Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites,  
     reproduction of watercolor from, 320  
 Indiana Territory, 11  
 Indiana University (Bloomington), 353  
 Indian Chute. *See* Indian Falls  
 Indian Falls (Louisville, KY), 246-47  
 Indian Mound (New Harmony), 296; drawn

by Lesueur, 13, 303; photo of, 148  
 Indian Queen Lane (East Falls, PA), 38  
 Indians (Native Americans): artifacts of,  
     drawn by Lesueur, 300-1; burial mounds  
     of, drawn by Lesueur, 271, 302-3; Clark's  
     museum of artifacts of, 83; early history  
     of, 11-12, 373n4; French and Indian War,  
     169; languages of, 12, 82, 288; Lesueur's  
     comments on, 385n20, 301-2; Lesueur's  
     interest in, 83, 296; in New Harmony, 155,  
     296, 337; photos of burial mounds of,  
     148, 309  
 Industrial Revolution, 17, 34  
*Industrie, L'* (Saint-Simon), 231  
*Instauratio Magna Scientiarum* (Bacon), 232  
 Institut de France (Paris), 25, 383n44  
*Introduction to the Prehistory of Indiana* (Keller),  
     301  
 Iowa (state), 353, 358  
 Iptingen (Germany), 50  
 Ireland, 53, 124  
 Iron Mountain (MO), 280  
 Isard [*sic*]. *See* Iazard family  
 Ismar, Frédéric Auguste, 317  
 Italy, 94, 104, 331, 353  
 Iazard family (Philadelphia), 97, 113

## J

Jackson, Andrew, 378n89, 401n52  
 Jackson, Charles Thomas, 177  
 James I (king), 232  
 Jardin des Plantes (Paris), 3, 87, 99-100, 179,  
     186, 388n97. *See also* Natural History  
     Museum (Paris); Professors  
     of the Museum (Paris)  
 Jardin Royal (Paris). *See* Jardin des Plantes  
 Jaurès, Jean, 229  
 Jefferson, Thomas: boycott on trade with  
     Britain, 132; and cooperative villages, 21,  
     233; death of, 81; Flower's friend, 145;  
     Lesueur's interest in, 79, 82, 84, 91; Lewis  
     and Clark expedition organized by, 83;  
     Louisiana purchase of, 11, 27, 83, 382n14;  
     Maclure influenced by, 47, 233; Maclure's

correspondence with, 80, 82; Maclure sent  
 to France by, 26-27, 230; *Notes* published  
 by, 81; and paleontology, 82, 84; president  
 of APS, 81; president of USA, 81-83  
 Jefferson County (MO), 290  
 Jeffersonville (IN), 246  
 jellyfish (Lesueur). *See* *Medusae*  
 Jennings, Robert L., 152, 368  
 Jessup, Augustus, 99  
 Jim Thorpe (PA). *See* Mauch Chunk  
 Johnson & Bondsley, 266, 340, 343  
 Joliet, Louis, 11  
 Jones, John C., 296, 369  
 Jordan, David Starr, 84, 302  
 Joslyn Art Museum (Omaha, NE),  
     reproduction of Bodmer's watercolor of  
     Lesueur from, 348  
*Journal du Havre* (newspaper), 180  
*Journal of ANSP*. *See* *Academy of Natural  
 Sciences of Philadelphia Journal*  
*Journals of C.-A. Lesueur*, 54, 75. *See also*  
     Lesueur, Charles-Alexandre  
*Journal of D. Macdonald*. *See under* Macdonald,  
     Donald  
*Journals of W. Maclure*: American journals, 47,  
     49-51, 54; Doskey's transcription, 378n98;  
     European Journals, 43, 47-48, 124, 136-37,  
     139, 162, 232; photo of page of, 136. *See  
     also* Maclure, William  
*Journal of R. D. Owen*. *See under* Owen, Robert  
     Dale  
*Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (Verne), 240  
 Juggs [*sic*]. *See* Hughes, Isabella  
 Jullien de Paris, Marc-Antoine, 231  
 Junto (Franklin), 81

## K

Kansas Territory, 11  
 Karlswood School (Bentham), 43  
 Kastkill. *See* Catskill Mountains  
 Keelboats (Lesueur): 287, 297. *See also*  
     *Philanthropist*  
 Keller, James H., 301  
 Kellogg, Almira Kilbourne Harris (Miner's

- mother), 401n51  
 Kellogg, Almira Sophia (Miner's sister), 276  
 Kellogg, Charles Fraser (Miner's father), 152, 276, 279-80, 401n51, 401n54; drawn by Lesueur, 281, 289  
 Kellogg, Charles Henry (Miner's older brother), 276  
 Kellogg, Elizabeth Gazlay (Miner's stepmother), 276, 401n51  
 Kellogg, Miner Kilbourne, 152, 276, 279, 401n52  
 Kellogg, Sheldon Ingalls (Miner's oldest brother), 276  
 Kennedy, David Johnston, 341  
 Kenneth Dale Owen Collection (New Harmony), 303, 371; Lesueur's drawings in, 114; reproduction of Lesueur's "Danse Macabre" from, 119; reproduction of Neef's contract from, 42  
 Kentmere Mill (Hagley), 114  
 Kentucky (state), 82-83, 245, 247, 249, 295, 358  
 Kentucky River, 11  
 Kern, Andreas Gottfried, 178  
 Kindergarten (Fröbel), 35  
 Kneass, William, 383n55  
 Knoedler, Christiana, 149  
 Knox County Jail (Vincennes), drawn by Lesueur, 10  
 Komensky, Johann Amos. *See* Comenius  
 Kosciuszko, Tadeusz, 382n15
- L**
- Lafayette, Gilbert du Motier de, 69, 90, 112  
 Laforest, Antoine-René-Charles-Mathurin de, 102  
 lakes. *See* Canandaigua Lake; Cayuga Lake; Champlain, Lake; Erie, Lake; George, Lake; Michigan, Lake; Ontario, Lake; Owasco Lake; Saratoga, Lake; Seneca Lake; Skaneateles Lake; Superior, Lake  
 Lamarck, Jean-Baptiste de Monet de, 47, 224  
 Lancaster, Joseph, 105, 132, 135, 137  
 Lancasterian schools, 105, 138, 229, 231, 386n61  
 Lanty de Chastenay, Louise-Marie-Victoire (*pseud.* Victorine) de, 193, 395n21  
 Lasteyrie, Charles Philibert de, 90  
 La Trobe, Benjamin (bishop), 53, 382n15  
 Latrobe, Benjamin Henry, 83, 382, 382n15  
 Lavoisier, Antoine Laurent de, 117  
 Lawrence, Levi, 152  
 Lebanon (PA), 167  
 Le Comte (Moravian botanist), 75, 99  
*Lecture on Human Happiness* (Gray), 167  
 Lederer, Alois von, 177  
 Leeds (England), 382n15  
 Le Havre (France), 3, 25, 27-28, 33, 179, 332, 357, 386n57, 410, 464; map of, by Lesueur, 411  
 Lehigh Coal & Navigation Company (Mauch Chunk), 392n23  
 Lehigh River (PA), 73-75; drawn by Lesueur, 71; photo of, 70  
 Lehighton (PA), 167  
 Leland Stanford Junior University (CA), 84, 302  
 Lemaître, Antoine-Marie, 386n57  
 Lemnos (mythology), 3  
 Lenz, David, 207; house of (*see under* Economy buildings and constructions; New Harmony buildings and constructions)  
 Léon, Count de (Bernhard Müller), 224-25  
*Leonard and Gertrude* (Pestalozzi), 34  
 Leschenault de La Tour, Jean-Baptiste Louis Claude Théodore, 3  
 Lesueur, Charles-Alexandre: and ANSP, 81, 381n1; and APS, 76, 81, 381n1, 381n4; art rarely signed by, 330; and Baudin expedition, 3, 25, 48, 88, 100, 103, 301; biblical references of, 293, 333-35; Bodmer's pictures of, 305, 348; and camera obscura, 153, 345-46; Chappellsmith's drawings of, 105, 320; collections of drawings by (*see* Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia; Kenneth Dale Owen Collection; Lesueur Collection in Le Havre; Lesueur Collection in West Lafayette; Natural History Museum in Paris); and Frédéric Cuvier, 18, 99-100; and Georges Cuvier, 3, 26, 48-49, 357, 361; dates mixed up by, 331, 380n57, 398n64, 403n58; and Desmarest (*see* Desmarest, Anselme); family of, 25, 99, 181, 376n41, 376n43, 384n64, 393n48, 395n21; and Eaton (*see* Eaton, Amos); and Fretageot (*see* Fretageot, Marie Louise Duclos); and Jefferson, 79, 81-82, 84, 91; journals of, 54, 75; God's works studied by, 181; Gribayedoff's portrait of, 420; mythological references of, 224, 333-34; and Neef, 36, 39-40, 123, 400n32; Niagara Falls commented by, 54; obituary of, 28, 376n41; and George Ord, 12, 17, 88-89; and Owen (*see* Owen, Robert); and Owen boys (*see* Owen, David Dale; Owen Richard); Peale's portrait of, 24, 85, 94; plates of, rediscovered in ANSP, 86, 383n55; problems with English of, 88, 89, 272, 334, 338; rattlesnake commented by, 54, 82; recognition of, 86-87; and Say (*see* Say, Thomas); steamboats commented by, 376n43; Swainson comments on, 85-86; and Troost (*see* Troost, Gerard); works hard, 86-87, 93. *See* Bibliography; Chronological and Thematic Index; List of Illustrations; USA History, Lesueur's interest in  
 Lesueur Collection (Le Havre), reproductions of: Albany, 45, 58; *American Ichthyology*, 338-39; Antilles, 1-2, 7; archeology, 300-302; Augusta, 247; Bethlehem, 69, 71; Big Sandy River, 245; Bonaparte estate, 113; Cairo, 284; Cave-in-Rock, 351; Charlestown, 248; Cincinnati, 242; Commerce, 288; contract with Maclure, 4-6; Du Pont estate, 115-16, 119-20; Easton soapstone quarry, 4; Economy, 216-17; England, 23, 29-30, 32; English Prairie, 143-46; Fort George, 58; Fort Pitt, 196-97; Gallipolis, 245; Guadeloupe, 1; Harrisburg, 195; Jim Thorpe, 165; Lake Champlain, 57, 59; Mauch Chunk, 165;

- Lesueur Collection (Le Havre), reproductions of (*continued*): Mine Lamotte, 352; Mississippi River, 286, 288; Missouri trip, 284-289, 291; Monaca, 225; Monongahela River, 197-98; Mount Vernon, 251-53; Nashoba, 307; Nazareth, 172, 176; Nevis, 7; New Bedford, 19; New Harmony, 13, 129, 153, 156, 255, 257, 260-61, 265, 268-69, 274, 277, 279-81, 293-94, 297, 302-4, 317, 324, 328-29, 331-33, 335, 345-46, 356; New Richmond, 247; Niagara Falls, 56; Ohio Brush Creek, 246; Ohio River, 189, 201, 225, 227, 234-35, 238-42, 244-49, 251-52, 284, 287; paleontology, 290, 360-1; Philadelphia, 39-40, 79, 91-92, 102, 107-8, 125-27, 159, 183-84; *Philanthropist's* journey, 189-90, 192, 198, 201, 216-17, 225, 227-28, 234-49, 251-53; Phillipsburg, 225; Pittsburgh, 196-98; Saint Kitts, 7; Saint Vincent, 2; Smithland, 287; Springfield mine, 291; Ste. Genevieve, 286; Steubenville, 241; turtles, 359; Valley Forge, 162-64; Vincennes, 10, 14, 16; Wabash River, 255, 268-69, 277, 279, 283, 297-98, 303. *See also* Natural History Museum (Le Havre)
- Lesueur Collection (West Lafayette), reproductions of: John Phillips peeling potatoes, 273; two women in a garden, 330; Frances Wright, 306; young woman before a window, 97. *See also* Purdue University Libraries Archives and Special Collections
- Lesueur, Geneviève Antoinette (Mrs. Jean-Baptiste Moullin), 99, 181, 376n41, 393n48
- Lesueur, Jean-Baptiste Denis: death of, 99, 104, 121, 181, 384n1; helps son, 99-100, 384n64, 385n16; letters from C.-A. Lesueur, 26-27, 95, 384n2, 395n21; lives with son, 25; loved by son, 28; Péron helps, 376n43; problems of, 99, 384n62; publishes article on steamboats, 376n43
- Lesueur, Stanislas, 376n43, 384n64
- Levillain, Stanislas, 3
- Lewis and Clark expedition, 16, 83-84, 100, 288
- Lewis, Meriwether, 83-84, 100, 201-2
- Lewiston (NY), 54
- Library of Congress (Washington, DC), reproduction of Jefferson's letter from, 80
- Lincoln, Abraham, 249, 391n86
- Lincoln, Thomas, 249
- Linnaean Society of New England (Boston), 103, 385n27
- Little Falls (NY), 57
- Little Prairie Christian Church (Albion), 146
- Liverpool (England), 28, 167
- Livingston, Robert R., 27
- Lochiel Hotel (Harrisburg, PA), 195
- Locke, John, 21, 376n53
- Lockwood, George Browning, 314
- Logie* (Condillac), 37, 105, 119
- Loir, Adrien Charles Marie, 25
- Loir, Hélène Virginie de Montès, 26, 401n54
- Loir, Marie-Louise (Mrs. Robert Hemphill), 25-26, 375n31
- London (England): drawn by Lesueur, 30; Gray published in, 167; Lesueur and Maclure visit, 28-30, 32, 33, 42, 90; Maclure meets Bentham in, 42; Maclure meets Owen in, 161, 378n97; Maclure's contacts in, 43; Maclure's firm in, 28; photo of, 31; Royal Society of, 43. *See also* Greenwich
- London Mechanics' Institute (Birkbeck College), 43
- Long, Stephen Harriman, 83, 99, 201-2, 385n20
- Long expedition: Lesueur comments on, 385n20; Lesueur unable to join, 99, 103; Lesueur wants to join, 83, 99-100, 385n16; members of, 99; mission objectives of, 384n6, 384n9; Say on, 89, 99, 201
- López, José Luis, 337, 404n70
- Lord (Creator). *See* God
- Lot-et-Garonne (France), 377n74
- Louisiana (state), 11
- Louisiana Purchase, 11, 27, 83, 382n14
- Louisiana Territory, 11, 27, 83
- Louisville Correspondent* (newspaper), 378n87
- Louisville (KY), 38, 41-42, 200, 239, 245, 247, 280, 295, 378n87
- Louisville and Portland Canal (KY), 247
- Louis XIV (king), 11
- Louis XVI (king), 117
- Louis XVIII (king), 99
- Louviers (Hagley), 114, 116-17
- Lutherans, 50, 62
- Lyon (France), 331

## M

- Macdonald, Donald: journal of, 151, 191-92, 253, 389n47, 390n76, 391n4; in New Harmony, 254; Owen's friend, 140, 239; on *Philanthropist*, 191-92, 239, 248, 253, 397n36; about Symmes's theory, 245
- Macdonough, Thomas, 58
- Maclure, Alexander (William's brother), 33, 265, 337, 399n15
- Maclure, Anna (William's sister), 33, 127, 310, 337, 388n102
- Maclure, Helen (Mrs. David Hunter). *See* McClure, Helen
- Maclure, James. *See* Maclure, William
- Maclure, John (William's brother), 33
- Maclure, Margaret (William's sister), 33, 310, 337
- Maclure, William: and APS, 25, 83, 93; attachment to orphans, 27, 37, 105-106, 337; attachment to working classes, 17, 34-36, 47, 77, 230, 337; and Bacon, 36, 229, 232-33; and Bentham (*see* Bentham, Jeremy); character of, 42, 94-95, 106, 120-21; drawn by Lesueur, 2, 19, 159, 201, 236-237; family of, 28-29, 33, 265, 337; father of American Geology, 354; and Fretageot (*see* Fretageot, Marie Louise Duclos); health of, 99, 104-5, 305, 337; historians do not focus on, 18, 131, 271, 358; and Jefferson, 26-27, 47, 80, 82-83, 230, 233; lithography by Milbert of, 43, 388n102; and Neef (*see* Neef, Francis Joseph); and Owen (*see* Owen, Robert);

- and Pestalozzi (*see* Pestalozzi, Johann Heinrich); philosophy of, 42, 52, 54, 81, 120, 156, 161, 229-33, 296, 305-6, 378n93; and Piquetal (*see* Piquetal d'Arusmont, Guillaume); portrait by Fournier of, 372; portrait by Northcote of, 230; portrait by Peale of, 24; portrait by Sully of, 160; professional career of, 28, 33, 83; publicity by Chappellsmith for school of, 320; wary of family, 33. *See* Chronological and Thematic Index; *Journals of W. Maclure*
- Madrid (Spain), 105
- Maine (France), 38
- Maine (USA), 177
- Maine de Biran, Pierre, 231
- Maison des Orphelins* (Paris), 37
- Mallon's Young Ladies' Seminary [Mrs. James Mallon] (Philadelphia), 97, 386n50
- Manchester Board of Health, 131
- Manchester Islands (Ohio River), 246
- Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, 131
- Mangrum, William Valentine, 412
- Manual Training School (New Harmony), 320, 337. *See also under* New Harmony schools
- Marblehead (MA), 58
- Marcel, Eugène, 179-81, 376n41
- Marcellus (NY), 57
- Marie Antoinette (queen), 117
- Margane, François (François-Marie Bissot) de Vincennes, 11
- Marquette, Jacques, 11
- Marryat, Frederick, 245-46
- Marseilles (France), 104
- Marsh, Herbert, 391n78
- Mary, Queen of Scots, 338
- Marxism, 231
- Massachusetts (state), 18, 58
- Mauch Chunk [Jim Thorpe] (PA), 161, 167-68, 392n26; drawn by Lesueur, 165
- Maugé de Cély, René, 3
- Maxwell Community (Lake Huron, Ontario), 139
- Mayflower*, 201
- McArthur, William, 254, 394n13
- McCall, George, 378n86
- McCall, William, 369, 402n2
- McCarter, William, 192, 394n13
- McClure, Ann Kennedy (Maclure's mother), 28
- McClure, Brydie & Co. (Richmond, VA), 28
- McClure, David (Maclure's father), 28
- McClure, Helen (Maclure's sister), 28, 33
- McClure, James. *See* Maclure, William
- McNamee, Elias, 399n14, 369
- Mead family (Philadelphia), 97, 113
- Médiathèque Emile Zola (Montpellier), reproduction of *Trasformazioni* engraving from, 224
- Mediation Act (Switzerland), 34
- Mediterranean Sea, 90, 105
- Medusae*, 85, 90, 224, 357; hand-colored engraving of, 87
- Melish, John, 49
- Mellberg, William F., 405n26
- Mémoires du Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle* (Paris), 94
- Memoir of Charles Alexander Lesueur* (Ord), 12
- Memoir of Alexander Wilson* (Ord), 89
- Memphis (TN), 280, 306-7
- Mennonites, 52
- Mercer, John Fenton, 27
- Meredith family (Philadelphia), 97, 113
- Meridith [*sic*]. *See* Meredith family
- Merriman's Riffle (Ohio River), 202
- Messiah. *See* Christ Jesus
- Methamorphoses* (Ovid), 224
- Method of Instructing Children Rationally in the Arts of Writing and Reading* (Neef), 375n24
- Methodists, 14, 194, 274, 398n2
- Mexico, 334, 337, 353, 404n70
- Mexico City (Mexico), 337, 404n70
- Mezzara, Angélique, 394n12
- Mezzara, Joseph E. A., 394n12; sculpture of Lesueur by (*see* Foreword)
- Miami (Indians), 11-12. *See also* Indians
- Michaux, André, 83
- Michigan, Lake, 11
- Michigan (state), 11, 358
- Middlebury (VT), 58
- Middletown (CT), 58
- Missouri expedition. *See* Long expedition
- Milbert, Jacques-Gérard, 43, 58, 122, 388n102
- Millennium, 52, 155-56, 194, 199, 202, 223. *See also under* biblical references; Christians
- Miller, Hart & Co. (London), 28
- Milligan, Harriet Elizabeth (Mrs. William Grimshaw), 97, 113, 386n50
- Mills, Robert, 126
- Mine Lamotte (MO), 280, 352
- Minerva (mythology), 330
- Minister of the Navy and Foreign Affairs (France), 100, 384n64
- Ministry of France, 100
- Minnesota (state), 11, 353, 358
- Mississippi Embayment (geology), 289
- Mississippi River: drawn by Lesueur, 286, 288; Lesueur's exploration of, 280, 289-90, 301; Lesueur's sketches of, 202; Lewis and Clark travel via, 99, 201; maps of, 395n54; marks American frontier, 11, 83; used for transportation, 254, 289-90; white clay of, 276, 279-80
- Missouri (state), 11, 280, 289-90, 301, 357-58
- Missouri River, 83, 99
- Mitchill, Samuel Latham, 81, 93
- Molière (Jean-Baptiste Poquelin), 333
- Monaca (PA), 224-25
- Monmouth (NJ), Battle of, 167
- Monnot, Stephen, 259
- Monocacy Creek (PA), 62, 73-74; photos of, 62-63
- Monongahela River, 194, 200; drawn by Lesueur, 197-98
- Monroe, James, 27
- Monroe, Will Seymour, 37, 375n23
- Monsant (France), 377n74
- Montana Territory, 11
- Montessori, Maria, 33
- Montgomery County (PA), 163-64, 166-67
- Montgomery, Robert, 106
- Montgomery Island (Ohio River), 238-39
- Monticello (Charlottesville, VA), 80, 83
- Moon, 12, 357, 362

Moore, William, house of, drawn by Lesueur, 125  
 Moravia (Czechia), 62, 168  
 Moravian Church Archives (Bethlehem, PA), 75; reproduction of Bethlehem map from, 60; reproduction of Nazareth map from, 174; reproduction of Steinhauer portrait from, 61; reproduction of Sun Inn daybook from, 75  
 Moravians: in Bethlehem, 54, 61-77, 161; Comenius, a bishop of the, 376n46; common property of, 62, 68-69, 169-70, 177-78; ecumenical work of, 73; interest in science and education, 76; in Ireland, 53; Lesueur and Maclure visit, 47, 53-54, 60-77, 161, 167-77; model of utopian experience, 77, 167, 177, 199, 229; in Nazareth, 62, 77, 161, 167-79; oldest buildings in USA of, 168; origins of, 61; in Savannah, 61, 75, 99, 380n65; in Scotland, 53, 229; theological seminary of, 73, 168, 179; traditional dress abandoned by, 168. *See also* Bethlehem; Nazareth; Zinzendorf, Nikolaus Ludwig von  
*Morbid Anatomy* (Godman), 84, 382n23  
 More, Thomas, 232  
*Morning Chronicle* (newspaper), 43  
 Morris, Edmund, 191  
 Morris, Gouverneur, 57  
 Morris, Robert, 127  
 Mortefontaine, Treaty of (Convention of 1800), 27  
 Morton, Samuel George, 374n1  
 Motherwell Community [project] (Archibald James Hamilton), 139. *See also* Owenism  
 Moullin, Adelle Eugénie (Lesueur's niece), 181, 376n41, 393n48, 395n21  
 Moullin, Françoise Genneviève (Lesueur's niece), 181, 376n41, 393n48  
 Moullin, Jean-Baptiste Antoine, 99  
 Mount Pleasant (East Falls, PA), 40  
 Mount Vernon (IN): boat landing drawn by Lesueur, 251-52; circuit court in, 254, 322; courthouse drawn by Lesueur, 253; destination of *Philanthropist*, 200-

1, 248, 253-54; Indian cemetery near, 296; Lesueur and Troost return to, 289; Maclure publishes pamphlet in, 321; New Harmony road to, 259, 281; Owen sends invitations to, 151; photo of boat landing of, 250; Say marries in, 306  
 Muhlenberg, Henry Ernest, 81  
 Muiron, Just, 229  
 Mulattos, 155, 245. *See also* Blacks; slavery; Indians; Whites  
 Müller, Bernhard, 224-25  
 Müller, Christopher, 209, 213, 379n21  
 Municipal Archives (Le Havre), 393n48  
 Municipal Council of Yverdon (Switzerland), 34  
 Murray (printer), 123  
 Musée des Artistes (Paris), 25  
 Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle du Havre. *See* Natural History Museum (Le Havre)  
 Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle. *See* Natural History Museum (Paris)  
 Mutschler, Hildegard, 223  
 Mutual System (Bell), 35

## N

Naples (Italy), 104  
 Napoleon. *See* Bonaparte, Napoleon  
 Napoleonic Code (France), 82  
 NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration), reproductions of *Apollo 17* mission photos from, 362-65  
 Nashoba (Germantown, TN), 306-7  
 Nashville (TN), 332, 334, 358, 361  
 National Archives (Paris), 179; reproduction of Lesueur's letter from, 80  
 National Guard (France), 26  
 National Museum (Washington, DC), 354. *See* Smithsonian Institution  
 National Portrait Gallery (London), reproduction of Owen's portrait in, 160  
 Native Americans. *See* Indians  
 Natural History Museum (Cincinnati), 202, 240  
 Natural History Museum (Le Havre):

collection of drawings and letters in, 4, 18, 88, 93, 127, 192, 201, 332, 357, 376n41, 395n53, 395n54; curators of, 4, 25-26, 401n54; Lesueur's family donates documents to, 376n41; reproduction of Lesueur's bust in, 394n13. *See also* Lesueur Collection (Le Havre)  
 Natural History Museum (Paris), F  
 Cuvier gets chair in, 384n7; Lesueur, corresponding member of, 88, 94, 99, 124, 185; Lesueur's drawings in, 27, 376n41, 382n20; Lesueur's family donates documents to, 376n41; Lesueur wants to return to, 161; Lesueur's articles published by, 94, 380n42; Lesueur's letters to, 93, 100, 103, 180, 185, 334; Lesueur's requests for funding by, 99-100, 180; reproduction of Bodmer's engraving of Lesueur from, 305; Swainson comments on, 85. *See also* Chronological and Thematic Index  
*Natural History of the Fishes of North America* (Lesueur), 94, 306, 357; reproductions of, 338-39  
 Nazareth (PA): and Bethlehem, 62, 177, 181; botanical garden in, 168; common property in, 62, 169-70, 177-78; drawn by Lesueur, 172, 176; Ephrata tract in, 168; founding of, 62; Gnadenstadt site near, 169; Indians attack, 169; Lesueur and Maclure visit, 77, 161, 167-77; Maclure comments on, 77; map of, 174; and Mauch Chunk, 392n26; natural history museum in, 168; photos of, 168-71, 173, 175, 177-179; and Schoeneck, 168; school for boys in, 74, 168, 170-71, 176-77; school for girls in, 179. *See also* Moravians; Nazareth buildings and constructions; Nazareth street names; Zinzendorf, Nikolaus Ludwig von  
 Nazareth buildings and constructions: barn, 172; community store, 172-73; gray cottage, 168; gun shop of William Henry, 172; hat factory, 172; house of Henry Albright, 172; house of Jacob Christ, 172; house of Franz Danke, 176; house of

- Andreas Gottfried Kern, 172, 178; house of school inspector, 176; house of George Whitefield, 168, 179; market house, 172; Moravian Theological Seminary, 179; Nazareth Hall, 170-71, 176-77; Nazareth Inn, 172, 177; Nazareth Moravian Church, 168, 172-73; parsonage, 173; Rose Inn, 169; school laundry, 176; single sisters' house, 171, 176-77; stable, 176; taverns, 169, 177; Zinzendorf's manor house, 169-171, 176
- Nazareth street names: Belvidere Street, 172; Center Square, 174-75, 178; Center Street, 172, 176-77, 179; Green, 170-71, 176; Main Street, 172, 175; Nazareth Circle, 172-73
- Neagle, John, 88
- Nebraska (state), 358
- Nebraska Territory, 11
- Nedeljkovic, Maryvonne, 401n54
- Neef, Anne Eliza (Mrs. Richard Owen), 41, 315, 329
- Neef, Caroline Charlotte (Mrs. David Dale Owen), 41, 315, 329
- Neef, Francis Joseph Nicholas (Franz Joseph Nikolaus Näf): arrives in USA, 37, 377n85, 378n88; Condillac's *Logic* translated by, 37, 119, 375n24, 385n40; 385n40; criticism on teaching method of, 41, 47, 306, 315, 328; early life of, 36-37; Fretageot accused by, 321, 330; Fretageot accuses, 306, 315; house in New Harmony (*see* Number Two; Neef-Lesueur House); leaves New Harmony, 329, 400n32; Lesueur prepares cabinet for school of, 123; Lesueur's friendship with, 36, 400n32; Maclure's contract with, 41-42, 377n85, 378n88; Maclure's expenses for, 329; Maclure meets, 37, 375n23; math class of, 38; method of education of, 37-38, 41, 378n88, 398n62, 402n2; migraines because of bullet of, 36; moves to New Harmony, 245, 295; Owen accused by, 316, 321; Owen and Fretageot replace school of, 315, 328; Phiquepal assists, 36, 38, 41, 377n75; portrait of, 37; returns to New Harmony, 400n32, 404n68; schoolbooks not used by, 38; school of, drawn by Lesueur, 40; school of, in Paris, 37, 375n23, 375n24, 377n68; school of, near Louisville, 41-42, 95, 378n87; school of, near Philadelphia, 38-41, 119, 377n75, 377n77, 377n85, 392n39 (*see also* New Harmony Education Society; New Harmony schools); Skipwith assists, 377n75; students of, 37-38, 41, 315, 321; success of teaching method of, 38; teaches in Number Two, 262, 277
- Neef-Lesueur House (New Harmony), 275, 334, 338, 349, 394n19, 400n32; drawn by Lesueur, 13, 129, 265, 274, 303, 345-46, 356; photos of, 314, 347
- Neef, Louisa (Mrs. Oliver Evans, Jr.), 41, 306, 329
- Neef, Victor, 41, 329
- Neef (Näf), Luise Buss, 37, 41, 295, 315, 329
- Neff, Maria, 156
- Negroes (African Americans), 152, 155, 245, 289. *See also* slavery; Whites
- Neptunian theory (Werner), 379n5
- "Neshoba" Unitarian Universalist Church (Memphis), 307
- Netherlands, 25
- Neuhof (Birr, Switzerland), 34
- Nevis (Lesser Antilles), drawn by Lesueur, 7
- Newark group (geology), 47
- New Atlantis* (Bacon), 21, 156, 161, 233, 362; reproduction of a page from, 21
- New Bedford (MA), 18, 58; drawn by Lesueur, 19
- Newburgh (NY), 58, 61
- Newburyport (MA), 58
- New Castle (DE), drawn by Lesueur, 98
- New England (state), 47, 119
- New England Society for the Promotion of Natural History (Boston), 385n27
- New Hampshire (state), 177
- New Harmonie Healthcare Center (New Harmony), 394n19, 400n32
- New Harmony (IN): abolition movement in, 391n86; African Americans and, 152, 155, 391n86; animals in, 275-76, 401n46; ANSP members go to, 178-79, 181, 233; archives in, 104, 114 (*see also* Working Men's Institute; Kenneth Dale Owen Collection; Historic New Harmony); bicentennial celebration of, 365; botanical gardens in, 140, 275-76, 334 (*see also* New Harmony: gardens in); built by Harmonists, 11, 50, 52, 202, 212-13; called *Neu Harmonie*, 52, 140; cemeteries in, 144, 260, 271, 296, 302, 309, 399n15, 402n20; communities in, 274 (*see also* New Harmony Education Society; New Harmony Community of Equality); croup epidemic in, 260; Cut-off Island near, 259, 268-69, 297; Cut-off stream near, 259, 268-69, 277, 279, 297, 359; description of, 140, 259-60; designed by Frederick Rapp, 209; founded by Robert Owen, 138; Fox River, 186; funeral mounds of, 296, 302-3, 309; gardens in, 140, 151, 259, 274-76, 334; Gresham Creek, 274; importance of, 18, 358, 361-62; Kellogg's recollections of, 279-80; labyrinth in, ii-vi, 260, 399n15, 430; Lesueur departs for, 185, 191-92; Lesueur depicted in, 105, 305, 320, 348; Lesueur draws, 131 (*see also* New Harmony, drawn by Lesueur); Lesueur's reaction to events in, 12, 18, 332, 334; Lesueur's reasons to go to, 12, 17, 106, 161, 179-82, 185-86, 338, 349; Lesueur's scientific work in, 289-90, 296, 301-3, 305, 334, 338, 349, 353, 358; Lesueur's work for ANSP in, 193; Lincoln not allowed to go to, 249; Maclure buys quarter of, 295, 305, 321-22, 330-31, 390n72, 403n36; Maclure rents out houses in, 330, 338; map of, 20, 258, 267, 366; Mexican boys in, 337, 404n70; Murphy Park in, 141, 399n15; name of, 389n47; Neef leaves, 329; Neef moves to, 245; number of inhabitants in, 151, 260, 399n11, 399n13; 367-71; orchards of, 140, 151, 259, 260, 271; Owen and Maclure quarrel over, 18, 321-22, 329, 331;

New Harmony (*continued*): Owen and Maclure's utopian enterprise in, 17, 43, 131, 151, 161; Owen asks Maclure to follow him to, 77; Owen buys, 139-40, 149-51, 161-62, 202, 212, 401n45; Owen moves to, 137, 162; Owen plans to destroy houses in, 275; Owen, sole owner of, 155; Owen's youngest sons arrive in, 302, 358; *Philanthropist's* arrival at, 248, 253-54, 353; *Philanthropist's* trip to, 191-94, 200, 229; photography in, 405n12; population of, 259-60, 271; price of (*see* New Harmony: sale and price of); publishing in, 289-90, 302, 337-38, 349, 358; Rapp's reasons for leaving, 202; Ribeyre Island near, 259 (*see also* Cut-off Island); sale and price of, 140, 149-51, 202, 212, 276, 321-22, 390n54, 390n56, 390n65, 390n70, 390n73, 391n4, 401n45; Say and Lesueur in, 89, 254, 295, 302, 329, 334, 337-38, 349, 358; scientific outpost in, 357-58, 361; second village of Harmonists, 50; Smithsonian collections from, 353-54, 405n9, 405n13; split in two by Owen and Maclure, 18, 329; Thespian Society in, 114; Troost leaves, 331-32, 334; Troost moves to, 178, 181, 334; utopians leave, 319, 332; USGS headquarters in, 353; unstable market around, 202; vineyards of, 140, 151, 259-60; whooping cough epidemic in, 260. *See*

*also* New Harmony buildings and constructions; New Harmony Education Society; New Harmony Community of Equality; New Harmony schools; New Harmony street names

New Harmony buildings and constructions: barns, 140; brewery, 140; bridge, 277, 279; churches (*see* New Harmony churches); community houses (*see* Number One to Five); cooper shop, 327, 346; cotton and wool factory, 13, 140, 149, 271, 303; distilleries, 140; drawn by Lesueur (*see* New Harmony, drawn by Lesueur); dye-house, 259, 271; flour mill, 140, 268-69, 271;

granaries, 140, 259 (*see also* New Harmony granary); greenhouse, 275, 345; hospital, 260, 271, 399n14; house of accountant, 272; house of John Beal, 327 (*see also* New Harmony: house of David Lenz); house of George Bentel, 342; house of Hodge-Fretageot, 266; house of David Lenz, 157, 263-64, 270, 323, 346; house of C.-A. Lesueur (*see* Neef-Lesueur House); house of Maria Neff, 156, 257; house of Owen brothers, 340, 343; house of Jane Owen, 326; house of John Reichert, 265; house of James Sampson, 346; house of Thomas Say, 308; house of Friedrich Weingartner, 265; house of Salomon Wolf, xxv, 342; houses mentioned, 13, 140, 149, 156, 259-60, 261, 275-76, 303-4; log cabins, xvi-xvii, 140-42, 153, 157, 259, 261, 263-64, 270, 274-76, 322-25, 344; mechanics shop, 140; natural history museum, 234, 295-96, 334, 353; New Harmony Hall (*see* New Harmony churches); oil and hemp mill, 140; Old Dam, 8-9, 259, 269; orangerie, 265, 345-46; pottery, 276, 279-80; rope maker's shop, 271; saddler shop, 346; sawmills, 140; shoe factory, 261, 265, 317, 328; school of Harmonists, 156; smoke house, 156, 257, 280; stables, 140, 153, 156, 259-60; Steeple House (*see under* New Harmony churches); store, 140, 261, 271-72, 276, 293, 335, 371; tanyard, 140; tavern (*see* Yellow Tavern); tailor shop, 261; warehouse, 140, 261, 371; water pump, 156, 257; wharf and boat landing, xxii, 255, 259, 297; wine press house, 265, 274, 345-46, 356; workshops, 140, 260, 271. *See also*

Atheneum; Neef-Lesueur House; New Harmony churches; Number One to Five; New Harmony granary; Owen's Number One; New Harmony street names; Roofless Church; Working Men's Institute; Yellow Tavern

New Harmony churches: activities in brick church, 151, 295, 398n2; brick church called "Hall," 259; brick church

demolished, 314; brick church drawn by Lesueur, 13, 129, 153, 224, 257, 265, 274, 293, 303-4, 317, 328, 341, 345-46, 356; "Door of Promise" in brick church, 129-30, 215, 345, 356; education in brick church, 317, 328; education in frame church, 259, 277; frame church called "Steeple House," 259, 398n2; frame church called "The Church," 398n2; frame church demolished, 265; frame church drawn by Lesueur, 13, 257, 265, 293, 303, 335; Lesueur lives in brick church, 272, 334, 400n32; living-space created in brick church, 272; museum in brick church, 253; photos of brick church, 314, 412; sold to Maclure, 295

*New Harmony Communities* (Lockwood), photo of the brick church in, 314

New Harmony Community of Equality: account books of, 180, 254, 272, 365, 367-371, 400n23, 400n24, 400n26; activities for participants of, 155; Agricultural Society in, 295-96, 316, 328; Commercial Society in, 295-96, 316, 328; committee of administrators of, 155, 271, 272, 276; common property in, 152, 155, 181, 275-76, 329; community dress in, 293-95, 317, 330, 333-35; Constitutionalists (Community N° 1) in, 274, 403n22; constitutions of, 152, 155, 240, 274; contracts for members of, 296; dissolution of, 312, 316, 321; economic problems of, 260, 271-72, 276, 399n19; end of social system of, 18, 316, 321, 329, 334; English Prairie families join, 143, 274; equality of members of, 152, 155, 200; Feiba-Peveli members or English Society (Community N° 3) split from, 274, 390n73, 394n19, 400n32; labor notes of, 400n23; Literati (future Education Society) split from, 274; Maclure's financial contributions to, 321-22, 329 (*see also* New Harmony Education Society; New Harmony schools); Macluria members (Community N° 2) split from, 274; monetary system of, 180, 271-72, 371,



- 400n23; names of communities of, 155, 254, 274, 295-96, 321-22, 365; names of participants of, 367-371; porcelain project for, 279-80; records of, 371; reorganization of, 274, 295-96; school system of (*see* New Harmony Education Society; New Harmony schools); Sunday service under, 259; time-money system of, 272, 400n23; utopians leave, 319; wages in, 180, 272, 400n23; workmen in, 260, 271. *See also* New Harmony Education Society; New Harmony Preliminary Society
- New Harmony, drawn by Lesueur: boat landing, 255, 297; brick church, 13, 153, 257, 265, 274, 293, 303-4, 324, 335, 341, 345-46, 356; brick church interior, 129, 317, 328; Church Street, 129, 153, 255, 261, 265, 293, 324, 332, 335, 341, 345-46, 356; Cut-off Island, 268-69, 277, 297; Cut-off stream, 268-69, 277, 279, 297; Door of Promise, 129, 345, 356; ferry, 255; flour mill, 268-69; frame church, 13, 257, 265, 293, 303, 335; granary, 346, 356; Indian Mound, 13, 303; Lesueur's house, 265, 274, 324, 345-46, 356; Main Street, 153, 156, 255, 261, 265, 293, 335, 346, 356; map, 302, 366; Mount Vernon road, 281; Number One, 13, 303-4, 335; Number One kitchen, 304; Number Two, 13, 303; Number Three, 153, 356; Number Three kitchen, 265; Number Three stable, 153; Number Four, 13, 303, 346, 356; Number Five, 13, 294, 303, 329, 341, 345-46, 356; Number Five interior, 333; Number Five stable, 260; orangerie, 345-46; Owen's Number One, 345; public pump, 156, 257; saddler shop, 346; James Sampson's house; 346; shoe factory, 261; shoe factory interior, 317, 328; smoke house, 156, 257, 280; store, 261, 293, 335; tailor shop, 261; town square, 153, 156; Wabash River, 255, 297; warehouse, 261; West Street, 265, 324, 335, 345-46, 356; wine press house, 274, 345-46, 356; Yellow Tavern, 156, 261, 280, 293, 335. *For distant elements see*
- New Harmony buildings and constructions
- New Harmony Education Society: creation of, 295-96, 316; Fretageot excommunicated from, 315, 403n22; Lesueur joins, 295; loses most of its pupils, 315, 319, 328, 330; Maclure buys land for, 295, 305, 321-22, 330-31, 403n36; in Number Two, 262, 312; in Number Five, 277; Owen gets lease from, 295, 371; records of, 371; survives as independent community, 316. *See also* New Harmony Community of Equality; New Harmony schools
- New-Harmony Gazette*. constitution published in, 152, 155; editors of, 152 (*see also* Bibliography); end of social system announced in, 316; Fretageot's arrival mentioned in, 254, 386n47; Lesueur and Maclure's arrival mentioned in, 254; Lesueur and Troost's discoveries published in, 290, 358, 401n60; motto of, 152, 391n78; Owen's inaugural address published in, 152, 390n76; reproduction of pages of, 154; subscriber list of, 371
- New Harmony granary: drawn by Lesueur, 13, 303, 346, 356; first photo of, 405n12; headquarters of USGS in, 353, 356; photo of, 313; sold to Maclure, 295; used for community meals, 312. *See also* New Harmony buildings and constructions: granaries
- New Harmony Preliminary Society, 152, 155, 295, 365; records of, 371. *See also* New Harmony; New Harmony Community of Equality; New Harmony schools
- New Harmony schools: blacksmith shop used by, 277; churches used by, 259, 277, 317, 328; called Manual Training School, 320; called Orphan's Manual Training School, 337; called School of Industry, 262, 320, 337, 339, 405n12; Dupalais children in, 193; James Frazer in, 240; Fretageot closes, 193, 349, 404n78; importance of, 362; Kellogg's comments on, 279; Lesueur employed in, 186, 277, 349; Maclure gives new impetus to, 337; Maclure transfers own schools to, 182, 233, 254; Maclure's expenses for, 329; Maclure's reorganization of, 320, 337; Mexican children in, 337; Neef about organization of, 316, 321-22; Neef joins, 245, 295; Neef and Troost leave, 330-31; *New-Harmony Gazette* about, 254; Cecilia Noël in, 192-93; Number Two used by, 262, 329; Number Five used by, 262, 277; Owen's alternative to, 315, 318-19, 328; Pestalozzian system of, not introduced by Maclure, 402n2; Phiquepal fired from, 329; teachers of, 200, 277, 295, 315, 320-21, 328-29, 337, 402n2; tensions between teachers of, 239, 306, 315. *See also* New Harmony Education Society; School of Industry
- New Harmony street names: Brewery Street, 153, 327, 343, 399n4; Church Street, 153, 259, 261, 265, 275, 327, 334, 345-347, 356, 399n4, 400n32; East Street, 153, 399n4; Granary Street, 259, 308, 326, 342, 399n4; Locust Street, 399n15, 402n20; Main Street, 259, 260, 266, 271, 275, 398n1, 399n4, 404n78; North Street, 141, 157, 263, 399n4; Ropewalk, 260, 264, 271, 344; South Street, 399n4; Steam Mill Street, 261, 266, 271, 399n4; Tavern Street, 259, 261, 271, 340, 343, 398n1, 399n4; Town Square, 156, 257, 259, 261; West Street, 263, 265, 276, 308, 334, 345-47, 356, 399n4, 400n32; Wood Avenue, 399n15, 402n20
- New Industrial World* (Fourier), 229
- New Jersey (state), 61, 113, 161, 167, 185
- New Lanark (Scotland), 43, 131-40: dancing in, 131, 134, 137-38; engravings of, 133-34; Flower's visit to, 140; Maclure's visit to, 137, 139-40, 162; model for other industries, 135-36, 139-40; orchestra of, 138; reforms in, 131-32, 137, 161; school of, 132, 134, 137-39; typhoid epidemic in, 139; use of books in, 132, 137;

New Lanark (*continued*): visitors of, 137; working conditions in, 131-32, 136, 139  
 New Lanark Trust, New Lanark Mills (Scotland), reproductions of engravings from, 133-34  
 New Lanark Twist Company, 131  
 New Orleans (LA), 185, 191, 254, 297, 305, 377n77, 384n9, 395n51  
 New Philadelphia Society (Monaca), 224-25  
 Newport (RI), 58, 61, 75  
 New Richmond (OH), 247  
 Newton, Isaac, 21  
*New View of Society* (Owen), 135-36  
 New York (NY): Austrian consul to, 177; Bethlehem organ from, 74; elite of, 77, 162; Grace Church in, 354; Lesueur stays in, 57, 58; lithography in, 93, 122; Maclure stays in, 57, 58, 161-62; David McClure's trade with, 28; New Harmony collections sent to, 353-54; Owen stays in, 12, 162; *Philanthropist's* baggage sent to, 254; steamboat for Long expedition built in, 99; St. Patrick's Cathedral in, 354  
 New York (state), 54, 61, 161; Lesueur's paleontological work in, 48, 357  
*New-York Daily Tribune* (newspaper), 391n86  
 Ney, Michel (general), 375n24  
 Niagara Falls (NY), 54; drawn by Lesueur, 56  
 Nice (France), 90  
 Nidwalden (Switzerland), 34  
 Niemcewicz, Julian Ursyn, 83, 382n15  
 Noël, Cecilia (Mrs. Achille Fretageot), 191-193, 200, 239, 248, 394n17, 397n36; drawn by Lesueur, 243  
 Noël, Charles F., 191, 193, 394n17, 394n20  
 Noël, Sophie Dupalais, 191, 193, 394n20  
 Norfolk (VA), 33, 382n15  
 Normandy (France), 38, 354  
 North, William, 57  
 North America: Natural History of, 84; oldest Moravian structure in, 168; Richard Harlan studies fauna of, 84; Lesueur needs practical home-base for exploring in, 179; Lesueur's article on steamboats in, 376n43; Lesueur studies fish of, 76, 81, 93, 124,

306, 338-39, 357, 404n74, 404n78; Lewis and Clark study geography and geology of, 83 (*see also* Lewis and Clark expedition); Maclure studies geology of, 25, 47-49, 93, 354 (*see also* *Observations on the Geology of the United States*); Say studies shells of, 302 (*see also* Say, Thomas); Wilson studies birds of, 84 (*see also* Wilson, Alexander); Zinzendorf preaches in, 62 (*see also* Moravians). *See also* USA  
 Northampton (MA), 38  
 Northampton County (PA), 77  
 North Dakota (state), 358  
 North Pole, 240  
 Nottingham, John, 332, 369  
*Nouveau Bulletin des Sciences* (Société Philomatique de Paris), 85, 90  
 Noyes, John Humphrey, 156  
 Number One (New Harmony), 259, 271, 276, 345; drawn by Lesueur, 13, 303-4, 335; kitchen of, 304. *See also* Owen's Number One  
 Number Two (New Harmony), 259; drawn by Lesueur, 13, 303; kitchen of, 262; Lesueur, Say and Tiebout work in, 262, 404n78; Neef lives in, 400n32; photos of, 262, 318-19; photos of kitchen of, 262, 319; sold to Maclure, 295; used as a boarding school, 329  
 Number Three (New Harmony), 259; drawn by Lesueur, 153, 356; kitchen of, drawn by Lesueur, 265; stable of, drawn by Lesueur, 153; used as a hotel, 153, 398n1  
 Number Four (New Harmony), 259, 327; called Thrall's Opera House, 405n12; drawn by Lesueur, 13, 303, 346, 356  
 Number Five (New Harmony): drawn by Lesueur, 13, 294, 303, 329, 341, 345-46, 356; garden of, 275, 341; inhabitants of, 275, 294, 328, 341; photo of, 310-11; Rapp's residence in, 259-60; sold to Maclure, 295, 341; stable of, 260; used as a boarding school, 262, 277  
 Nursery School (Oberlin), 132  
 Nuttall, Thomas, 81, 392n39

## O

O'Reilly, Mary (Mrs. Gerard Troost), 272, 334, 400n32; drawn by Lesueur, 293, 335  
 Oberlin, Johann Friedrich, 132, 389n9  
 Obernesser, Balthazar, 192, 254, 394n13  
*Observations on the Effects of the Manufacturing System* (Owen), 135  
*Observations on the Geology of the United States* (Maclure), 25, 49, 54, 76, 83, 93, 354, 361  
*Odyssey* (Homer), 224  
 Ohio (state), 11, 245, 295, 332, 358  
 Ohio Brush Creek (Ohio River), drawn by Lesueur, 246  
 Ohio History Connection (Columbus), reproduction of Eusebius Böhm maps from, 55, 258  
 Ohio Medical College (Willoughby), 358, 361  
 Ohio rapids. *See* Indian Falls  
 Ohio River: boundary of free states, 155; boundary of Indiana Territory, 11; bridges on, 197, 234, 239; called Belle Rivière, 12, 201, 395n51; Economy on, 202, 209; Fathers of Natural History travel on, 200; first explorers on, 11-12, 201; Lesueur draws, 201-2; Lesueur travels on, 49, 191, 200-201, 289; maps of, 190, 395n54; navigation impossible on, 194, 234, 253; near New Harmony, 140, 254; photos of, 250, 282; rapids on, 202, 246-247; skating on, 234; source of, 194. *See also* Ohio River, drawn by Lesueur  
 Ohio River, drawn by Lesueur: at Augusta (KY), 247; near Brush Creek Island (KY), 246; near Burlington (OH) 201, 245; near Captina Island (WV), 189; at Charlestown (IN), 248; at Cincinnati, 242, 248; near Economy (PA), 234; near Gallipolis (OH), 245; near Manchester Islands (KY), 246; at Mount Vernon (IN), 251-52, 283; at New Richmond (OH), 247; at Phillipsburg (Monaca, PA), 225; at Safe Harbor (Beaver Valley, PA), 227, 234-35, 238-40; at Smithland (KY), 287; at Steubenville, 241; at Trinity (Cairo, IL), 284; near Troy, 249;

- near Wheeling (WV), 244. *See also*  
Ohio River
- Old Economy Village Archives (Ambridge, PA), 93, 399n6; reproduction of Economy map from, 203; reproduction of Rapp's portrait from, 53
- Olympus (mythology), 3, 35, 224
- Oneida (NY), 57
- Onondaga (NY), 57
- Ontario (Canada), 139
- Ontario, Lake, 54, 139
- Opinions on Various Subjects* (Maclure), 382n15
- Orbiston or New Babylon Community (Motherwell, Scotland), 139
- Ord, George, 12, 24, 88-89, 99, 179
- O'Reilly, Mary (Mrs. Gerard Troost), 272, 334, 400n32; drawn by Lesueur, 293, 335
- Organisateur, L'* (Saint-Simon), 231, 397n15
- Orphan's Manual Training School (New Harmony), 337
- Otis, Bass, 84, 93, 381n10, 387n80
- Otter Creek (VT), 58
- Oursel, Césaire, 376n41
- Outline of the System of Education at New Lanark* (R. D. Owen), 137
- Ovid's Fables*, 224
- Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso), 224
- Owasco (NY), 57
- Owasco Lake (NY), 57
- Owen, David Dale: appointed state geologist, 353, 358; Corgan about, 361; death of, 358; drawn by Lesueur, 303-4; first house in New Harmony of, 340, 343; geological studies in Europe of, 358; geological work of, 353, 358, 361; goes to Ohio Medical College, 358; Lesueur's *Archimedes* published by, 290; Lesueur trains, 302-4, 353, 358, 361; marries Caroline Charlotte Neef, 315; Neef's portrait by, 37; portrait of, 354; Smithsonian collections and, 405n13; stores minerals in brick church and granary, 356; Troost also trains, 358, 361; USGS and, 353-54, 356
- Owen, Jane Blaffer: memorial dedicated to husband of, 130; house in New Harmony of, 326
- Owen, Kenneth Dale: archival collections of, 114; wife's memorial dedicated to, 130. *See also* Kenneth Dale Owen Collection
- Owen, Richard: about Lesueur, 114, 192, 295, 302; appointed state geologist, 361; becomes Purdue University's first president, 361; drawn by Lesueur, 303-4; first house in New Harmony of, 340, 343; Lesueur trains, 302-5, 358, 361; marries Anne Eliza Neef, 315; portrait of, 315; stores minerals in brick church and granary, 356
- Owen, Robert: Academy members and, 156, 178-79, 182, 233; accused of sedition, 136, 140; agent of, in New Orleans, 377n77; agriculture, not a priority for, 276; Albion visited by, 143; Aston's satire on, 139; Bacon's *Atlantis* and, 156, 161, 233, 362; Bentham and, 43, 132, 138, 161; Bible use authorized by, 132, 137, 398n2; biblical language of, 155, 199-200; bibliography on, 388n1; and books for children, 132; buys supplies, 149-50, 272, 276, 401n45, 401n46; buys New Harmony and land, 11-12, 139-40, 149-51, 161-62, 202, 212, 276, 389n47, 390n54, 390n56, 390n65, 390n70; 391n4, 401n45; called "Master Spirit," 194, 275, 395n32; called "old Bob," 321; Christian religion attacked by, 135, 139; and community of property, 139, 152, 155, 181, 275-76, 329, 330; creates four classes of utopian members, 296; departs for USA, 140, 161; Donnachie about, 138; drawn by Chappellsmith, 138, 320; drawn by Lesueur, 317, 328; early life of, 131-32; Economy visited by, 202, 212-13; Education Society gives lease to, 295, 371; Education Society gets lease from, 295; Father of the Cooperative Movement, 131, 388n1; Finlay's attack on, 136; Flower visits, 140; founder of New Harmony, 138, 200; and Fourierism, 156, 229; Fretageot opens new school with, 315, 318-19, 328-29; Fretageot protects, 329; Fretageot spreads ideas of, 162; Fretageot visited by, 167, 182; geography classes of, 328, 332; handbill of, 199; helps working classes, 17, 43, 127, 131-32, 135-36, 194, 200; historians concentrate on, not Maclure, 18, 131, 271, 358; initiates many utopias, 139, 167, 194, 240, 295; and Jefferson's embargo, 132; leaves New Harmony, 161, 332, 337; legal bills proposed by, 127, 135-36, 139; Lesueur doubts success of, 17, 182, 185, 349; Lesueur meets, 162, 181, 378n97; Lesueur's reasons to join, 12, 17, 106, 161, 179-82, 185-86, 338, 349; lives in Number Five, 328, 294; lives in Yellow Tavern, 275; Maclure ends partnership with, 17-18, 50, 320-22; Maclure joins forces with, 17, 47, 77, 129, 131, 151, 162, 182; Maclure meets, 127, 139, 161-62, 182, 230, 378n97; Maclure's litigation with, 151, 321-22, 329-31; Maclure's money needed by, 305, 321; and Maclure split New Harmony in two, 18, 329; Maclure visits factories of, 136-37, 139; Maclure warns against, 321, 331; manservants of, 191-92, 248, 254, 398n53; on marriage and religion, 135, 139; on military exercises, 155, 391n90; and millennium, 155-56, 199-200, 202; and Mississippi clay, 280; motto of, 152, 194, 391n78; moves to Indiana, 131, 137, 139, 150; Neef accuses, 316, 321; New Harmony bought by, 50, 143; New Harmony committee set up by, 155, 276; New Harmony constitution written by, 152, 154-55; New Harmony dwellings to be destroyed by, 275-76; New Harmony inaugural address of, 151-54, 390n76; New Harmony's sole owner, 155; New Lanark factories of, 17, 43, 127, 131, 133; New Lanark schools of, 131-32, 134, 137-39; New York stopovers of, 12, 161-62; Oberlin visited by, 389n9; Ord disapproves of, 12, 179; W. Owen represents, 322; Owen's Number One built by, 276, 345;

Owen, Robert (*continued*): Pestalozzian method used by, 132, 138, 402n2; on *Philanthropist*, 191, 200, 202; philosophy of, 120, 131-32, 135, 137, 139, 156, 199-200, 229; Phiquepal employed by, 330; photo of bust of, 328; in Pittsburgh, 149, 151, 193-94, 212, 229; portrait of, 160; W. Price joins, in Liverpool, 167; publications of, 135-37, 155, 378n97; publicity campaigns of, 137, 151, 260, 271; Quaker partners hurt by, 135, 139; F. Rapp accompanies, 229; F. Rapp gives deed to, 149, 151, 212; F. Rapp negotiates terms with, 140, 149-51, 321; F. Rapp threatens, 321; G. Rapp corresponds with, 140; returns to England, 161, 332, 337; Sabbath condemned by, 135; and Saint-Simon, 229, 231; Say meets, 149; sheriff tries to arrest, 322, 329, 331; on slavery and races, 152-53, 246, 391n86; social system of, 152, 182, 185, 199-200, 233, 272, 275, 315-16, 321, 329, 349, 391n90 (*see also* Owen, Robert: philosophy of); spending of, 149, 276, 305, 316, 321, 390n55-56, 390n70, 401n45-46 (*see also* Owen, Robert: buys supplies); takes no advise, 151, 260, 305; Universal Peace Maker announced by, 199; utopian enterprise in New Harmony by, 43, 131, 151, 161; utopians unhappy with, 321; Village of Unity and Mutual Cooperation announced by, 275; Wanborough families join, 143, 274; wants full control of New Harmony, 328

Owen, Robert Dale: becomes member of Congress, 354, 391n86; calculates father's expenses, 401n45; calls Fretageot "Queen of the North," 338, 404n71; co-designs Smithsonian building, 354; comments on end of social system, 315-16; editor of *New-Harmony Gazette*, 152, 315; Fellenberg's student, 137; inquires about father in Louisville, 240; journal of, 185, 191-193, 212, 234, 394n2, 395n53; letter on Owenite graveyard, 399n15; Lincoln advised by, 391n86; lives in Number

Five, 275, 294, 328; pamphlet on New Lanark school, 137, 402n2; passenger on *Philanthropist*, 191, 240; portrait of, 357; publications of, 137, 378n97, 391n86; remarks on New Harmony sale, 140, 401n45; rides to New Harmony alone, 248, 253; about Symmes's theory, 240, 245

Owen's Number One (New Harmony), 276; drawn by Lesueur, 345. *See also* Number One [which is not the same building]

Owen, William Dale: brothers complain about, 399n20; in charge of New Harmony, 151, 260, 271, 276; comments on end of social system, 315-16; editor of *New-Harmony Gazette*, 152, 315; lives in Number Five, 275, 294; sent to Economy, 321; sent to Mount Vernon, 322; travels with his father, 140, 161, 391n4

Owenism, 139, 156, 167, 194. *See also* Maxwell Community, New Harmony, Orbiston or New Babylon Community, Yellow Springs

Ozark plateau (geology), 289

## P

Pacific Ocean, 3, 16, 25, 83

Page, Benjamin, 194

Palais, du. *See* Du Palais; Dupalais

Panopticon (Bentham), 43

*Paradise Lost* (Milton), 275

Paris (France): American embassy in, 25, 41-42; Auguste Comte teaches in Maclure's school in, 231; first lithographic printing press in, 90, 93; Fourier visited by Maclure in, 232; Fretageot buys lithographic press in, 121; Fretageot meets Maclure in, 106; Fretageot's former life in, 317; Fretageot uses Maclure's house in, 106; Institut Polytechnique in, 122; Lesueur defends city of, 26; Lesueur is Cuvier's student in, 3, 48; Lesueur needs correspondent in, 121; Lesueur needs to return to, 161, 179, 182; Lesueur sends natural history objects and notes to, 88, 94, 185; Lesueur trained by scientists from, 3; Lesueur wants to

study lithography in, 349; Lesueur writes to, 121, 185-86, 334; Lesueur's articles do not appear in, 124, 179, 182; Lesueur's prints in archives of Le Havre and, 93; Lesueur's reasons to leave, 27; Lesueur's turtles published in, 358; life expensive in, 99; Maclure establishes school in, 41 (*see also* Paris: Phiquepal's school in); Maclure in, 26-27, 95, 104; Maclure moves away from, 104-5; Maclure's house under surveillance in, 231; Museum of Natural History in, 27, 161, 180, 305, 382n20; National Archives in, 179; Neef teaches in, 27, 37, 41, 375n23, 375n24; Phiquepal's school in, 41, 43, 106, 124, 161, 191, 231; radical thinkers in, 230-31; Rue de la Sorbonne in, 25; Rue des Brodeurs [southern section of today's Rue Vaneau] in, 26, 106, 231; Saint-Simon visits Maclure in, 231; Society of Natural History in, 100; utopian commune near, 229

Paris basin (geology), 48

Parliament (Great-Britain), 135, 140

Patricia Payne Hurd Center for Music and Art, 70-71

Patterson, Robert Maskell, 83, 381n4

*Paul Jones* (steamboat), 287

Peale, Charles Willson, 81, 84-85, 89-90, 94; portraits by, 24, 89, 94

Peale, Titian Ramsay, 89, 99

Peale's Museum (Philadelphia), 84-85

Pears, Sarah, 395n48

Pears, Thomas, 155, 194, 272, 275, 399n19, 401n46, 402n2

Peck, Robert McCracken, 383n40

Peel, Robert, Sr., 135-36

Pelham, William, 152, 296, 398n2, 399n15

Penn, William, 81, 119, 162

Pennsylvania (state): declares Harmonist text unconstitutional, 51; Lesueur arrives in, 47, 49, 81; Lesueur does not intend to stay in, 179; Lesueur's income in France and, 123-24, 162; Maclure appreciates, 114, 119; Maclure's scientific expedition

- through, 161; Moravian communities in, 53-54, 61-62, 167-69; Neef arrives in, 37, 377n85, 378n88; Neef leaves, 41, 245; Rapp arrives in, 50, 202, 379n21
- Pennsylvania School for the Deaf (Germantown), 108-9
- Penny (Lesueur's dog), 305
- Penzance (Cornwall), 23
- Percival, Thomas, 131
- Péron, François, 3, 25-27, 33, 35, 83, 93, 224, 374n10, 375n25, 376n43
- Perrot, E. (engraver), 232
- Pestalozzi, Anna Schulthess, 37
- Pestalozzi, Gottlieb, portrait of, 35
- Pestalozzi, Johann Heinrich: arithmetic system of, 38, 138; concentrates on working-class children, 33, 35; early life of, 34-35; English schools use method of, 43, 127; Fretageot and Piquetal never met, 120; Fretageot uses method of, 106, 161, 254; Greaves uses method of, 43; Jullien de Paris writes about, 231; Lancaster and method of, 105, 229; Maclure meets, 33, 35-36, 41, 104, 375n23, 376n45; Maclure recruits teachers trained by, 28, 35-37, 41-42, 119, 377n62, 377n75; Maine de Biran studies with, 231; Neef sent to Paris by, 375n24; Neef uses method of, 27, 36-37, 245; New Harmony schools use method of, 161, 240, 245, 254, 295; Oberlin and, 389n9; Owen uses method of, 132, 138, 402n2; portrait of, 35; publications of, 34, 119; Rousseau's influence on, 34
- Petitain, Louis-Germain, 377n68
- Phalange, La* (Fourier), 229
- Phalanstery or Industrial Reform* (Fourier), 229
- Philadelphia (PA): Abadie's school in, 122; American Philosophical Society in, 81, 381n1, 381n4; British troops occupy, 162, 167; coal heats houses in, 167, 392n23; Virginia Dupalais born in, 191; elite in, 77; French consul in, 83; Fretageot in, 104, 106, 123, 254, 386n47; Fretageot spreads Owen's ideas in, 162; Fretageot visited by Owen in, 167, 182; Germantown school in, 106, 108; Harmony statue sculpted in, 223; Hentz leaves, 119; Jefferson about Maclure in, 80, 83; Latrobe in, 382n15; Lesueur feels unhappy in, 99, 124; Lesueur intends to leave, 17, 103, 124, 162, 179; Lesueur meets Owen in, 162, 181; Lesueur prefers not to publish in, 87-88; Lesueur provides services to, from New Harmony, 193; Lesueur's departure from, 179, 191, 193, 254, 357; Lesueur's drawing school in, 100; Lesueur settles in, 81-82, 89; Lesueur's mineral shop in, 95, 104; Lesueur's reasons for leaving, 12, 17, 106, 161, 179-82, 185-86, 338, 349; Lesueur's reasons for staying in, 94-95; Lesueur stays nine years in, 17; Lesueur teaches in, 85, 97, 100, 104, 106, 113, 123; Lesueur works for Constant Woodman in, 162; Lewis and Clark collections in, 83-84; lithography technique arrives in, 93, 121, 387n78, 387n80, 387n83; Long expedition departs from, 103; Maclure and Lesueur return to, 61, 77; Maclure appreciates, 114, 119; Maclure brings Academy members from, to New Harmony, 233; Maclure comments on real-estate prices in, 233; Maclure returns to, 161-62, 337; Maclure's and Lesueur's baggage sent to, 28; Maclure's brother John in, 33; Maclure's map published in, 49; map of, 101; Neef arrives in, 37; Neef leaves, 41; Neef's school near, 36-38, 119, 245, 377n75, 377n77, 377n85, 392n39; Neef's students from, 38; Owen and Maclure join forces in, 151, 182; Owen purchases goods in, 149; Owen visits Fretageot in, 167, 182; Owenites from, form cooperative community, 167; Peale's museum in, 84-85; Penn's Landing in, 162; Pennsylvania Hospital in, 92; Piquetal in, 28, 38, 41, 124, 254, 377n75; photo of, 80, 109-10, 112; President's House in, 127; Rapp arrives in, 50, 202, 379n21; Saint Paul's Episcopal Church in, 97; Sanderson's biography published in, 82; Swainson about Lesueur in, 85-86; waterfront of, 91. *See also* Philadelphia, drawn by Lesueur; Philadelphia street names
- Philadelphia, drawn by Lesueur: Cartmell and English, 125; Chestnut Street, 92, 126; Christ Church, 79, 91, 97; Cypress Street (Clever Alley), 125; Falls Bridge (East Falls), 39; Filbert Street, 107; Fretageot's school, 107, 183-84; Germantown Avenue, 102; Germantown school, 108; Grelaud's Female Seminary, 97, 113, 386n50; Reuben Haines's house (Wyck), 111; Laforest's country seat, 102; Laurel Hill, 39; Market Street 79, 91, 127; Robert Morris's house, 127; old Baptist church, 126; old courthouse, 91; Rising Sun Avenue, 102; Sixth Street, 125, 127, 386n50; Tenth Street, 126
- Philadelphia street names: Arch Street, 124, 162; Cedar Street, 386n50; Chestnut Street, 82, 92, 106, 126; Cypress Street (Clever Alley), 125; Eighth Street, 82, 91-92, 126, 162, 387n94; Filbert Street, 107, 123; Front Street, 77, 95, 124, 162, 381n88, 387n94; Germantown Ave, 102, 112; High Street (*see* Market Street); Indian Queen Lane (East Falls), 38-39; Market Street, 79, 82, 91, 127, 162, 387n94; Ninth Street, 39, 91-92, 126; Pear Street, 97; Ridge Road (Ave), 38-40, 123, 183-84, 248, 387n87; Rising Sun Ave, 102; Sansom Street, 124, 126, 387n94; Second Street, 91, 162; Seventh Street, 79, 80, 82, 91; Seybert Street, 183; Sixth Street, 82, 91, 123, 125, 127, 381n88, 387n94; Tenth Street, 126; Third Street, 97, 386n50; Twelfth Street, 107, 386n50; Walnut Street, 124, 386n50; West School House Lane (Germantown), 109
- Philanthropist* (keelboat): animals stuffed on, 248, 353; brings baggage from Shawneetown to New Harmony, 254, 353; called *Boat Load of Knowledge*, 193, 200, 249, 395n48; called *Mayflower*, 201; in Cincinnati, 240;

- Philanthropist* (keelboat) (*continued*): Virginia Dupalais boards, 191, 240; near Economy, 202, 213; Helen Fisher disembarks, 240; James Frazer boards, 240; through Indian Falls, 246-47; itinerary of, 190, 200; Lesueur accompanied by children on, 191-93; Lesueur's passenger list for, 191-92, 200; Abraham Lincoln wants to board, 249; in Louisville, 245; Donald Macdonald boards, 240; at Mount Vernon, 248, 253-54; at New Harmony, 254; Cecilia Noël boards, 240; number of passengers of, 194, 200; R. Owen about, 200-1; R. Owen disembarks from, 229, 240; passengers from Philadelphia board, 191-92, 200, 394n13; passengers disembark from, 229, 240, 248, 253-54; passengers of, in Yellow Tavern, 245, 398n1; in Pittsburgh, 200; at Safe Harbor, 233-40; at Steubenville, 240; Stedman Whitwell boards, 239
- Philanthropist*, drawn by Lesueur: in Cincinnati, 242-43; interior of, 201, 228, 243, 248; ladies of, 243; at Mount Vernon, 251; on Ohio, 189, 201; on passenger list of, 192; at Phillipsburg, 225; in Pittsburgh, 198; at Safe Harbor, 227, 234-35, 238-40
- Philanthropist* (Allen), 43
- Philanthropist (Prometheus), 3
- Phillips, John, drawn by Lesueur, 273
- Phillips, Maurice E., 86, 383n55
- Phillips, Stephen, 225
- Phillipsburg (PA), 224; drawn by Lesueur, 225
- Philomatic Society of Paris, 18, 90
- Phiquepal d'Arusmont, Frances Sylva (Mrs. William Eugene Guthrie), 237, 397n32
- Phiquepal d'Arusmont, Guillaume Sylvain Casimir: accident of, 234, 237, 239; birth and American name of, 377n74; character of, 120-21, 124, 329; and Chouans, 38, 377n75; departure from Paris of, 124; departure from Philadelphia of, 181-82, 191; drawn by Lesueur, 236-37; in Economy, 202, 212-13; Fretageot appreciates, 306; Fretageot assists, 106, 120; Lesueur convinced by, 182, 349; and Lesueur's contract, 6, 25, 28, 41; Lesueur's correspondent, 121; lives in Number Five, 275; Maclure does not trust, 120; Maclure fires, 329, 331; Maclure's expenses for, 329; Maclure's plans in Spain for, 124; member of Education Society, 295; Milbert's lithograph of, 43, 388n102; and Neef, 38, 41, 377n75; New Harmony church and blacksmith shop used by, 277; in *New-Harmony Gazette*, 254; Owen employs, 330; and Pestalozzi, 120; on *Philanthropist*, 191-92, 200, 245, 248, 253; school in Paris of, 41, 106, 231; school in Philadelphia of, 124; stays in Yellow Tavern, 254; stubbornness of, 120; students of, 43, 106, 124, 181, 191, 234, 253, 388n102; teaches young men, 277
- Phoenixville (PA), 167
- Pickering, Charles, 393n1
- Pickering, John, 81
- Pickersgill, Henry W., 233
- Piedmont geologic province (Appalachians), 47
- Piggot, Robert, 381n10
- Pittsburgh (PA): bridge northwest of, 234; cooperative community in, 194; drawn by Lesueur, 196-98; Dupalais and Noël stay in, 200; Economy, north of, 202; Hanks about keelboat from, 249; Harmony, north of, 49; Lesueur comments on fort in, 194; Lesueur draws after departure from, 201; Lesueur sees Dupalais and Noël in, 239; Lesueur visits market of, 194; Maclure and Lesueur travel to, 47, 49, 182, 191, 193-94, 394n2; Owen gets New Harmony deed in, 149, 151, 212, 229; Owen gives lecture in, 194; *Philanthropist* departs from, 191, 200, 395n48; utopians travel to, 182, 191, 193-94, 394n2. See also *Philanthropist* (keelboat)
- Pittsburgh mines (PA), 49, 194
- Pittsfield (MA), 58
- Pitzer, Donald Elden, 388n1; photo of Harmonist warehouse by, 51; photo of Frederick Rapp house by, 50; photo of Waldman family house by, 52. *See also*
- Foreword
- Place, Francis, 43, 135, 378n98
- Podmore, Frank, 132, 388n1
- Point Breeze (Bordentown, NJ), 113
- Poland, 62, 382n15
- Politique, Le* (Saint-Simon), 397n15
- Pompée, Pierre-Philibert, 375n23, 375n24, 377n69
- Ponceau, Peter Stephen du, 82
- Pont, du. *See* Du Pont
- Poor Richard's Almanack* (Franklin), 81
- Popular Science Monthly* (Youmans), 84; reproduction of David Dale Owen's portrait in, 354; reproduction of C.-A. Lesueur's portrait in, 420
- Port-au-Prince (Haiti), 394n20
- Porter, Peter B., 57
- Portpatrick (Scotland), 53
- Posey County (IN), 150-51, 322
- Posey County Circuit Court (IN), 253-54, 322
- Potosi (MO), 280, 289, 291, 301
- Pottsville (PA), 167
- Preliminary Society. *See* New Harmony Preliminary Society
- Prentice, Mr. (B. Bakewell's friend), 194
- Presbyterians, 14, 135
- Price, Caroline Fisher, 191-92; drawn by Lesueur, 243
- Price, Emelia Benjamin (Mrs. David Pugh Marshall), 191-92; drawn by Lesueur, 243
- Price, Hannah Fisher, 191, 234, 240, 248, 253, 394n13; drawn by Lesueur, 243
- Price, Philip, 178, 181
- Price, Sarah Redwood (Mrs. Ludwig Hanau), 191-92; drawn by Lesueur, 243
- Price, William: arrives in New Harmony, 248, 253; brother of Philip, 178; decides to go to New Harmony, 181; falls into Ohio water, 240; Lesueur hunts with, 234; Owen joined by, 167; on *Philanthropist* with family, 191-92, 200, 248, 394n13; Phiquepal nursed by, 237, 239; trip in Pennsylvania with Lesueur and Maclure, 162, 167
- Princeton (IN), 151, 259, 321, 403n58
- Principle of Faunal Succession (Smith), 76

*Proceedings of the ANSP* (Philadelphia), 86  
 Professors of the Museum (Paris): Lesueur sends objects and notes to, 94; Lesueur's father writes to, 99; Lesueur supported by, 100, 103; Lesueur writes to, 93, 179-80, 185-86, 334, 385n16, 385n17, 388n97; photo of Lesueur's letter to, 180  
*Projet d'Organisation pour les Écoles Élémentaires* (F. Cuvier), 230  
 Prometheus (mythology), 3, 17, 35, 77, 200  
 Protestants, 34, 41, 61  
 Providence Public Library (RI), reproduction of *Biography* from, 82  
 Purcel, Rosamond, 383n40  
 Purdue University (West Lafayette), 315  
 Purdue University Libraries Archives and Special Collections, 361; reproduction of Richard Owen's portrait from, 315. *See also* Lesueur Collection (West Lafayette)

## Q

Quakers: Birkbeck, an influential, 144; Fretageot uses Bible to please, 119; Haines and Wistar families are, 112; Neef attracts students among, 41; Owen hurts partnership with, 135, 139; Owen's school influenced by, 137  
 Quasi-War, 26, 375n19  
 Quebec (Canada), 11  
 Queenwood Harmony Hall Community (Hampshire), 139  
 Quesney, Edouard-François, 28, 181, 376n41  
*Quest for the New Moral World* (Harrison), reproduction of an Owenite handbill in, 199

## R

Raccoon Creek (PA), 238  
 Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino (Raphael), 85  
 Rafinesque, Constantine Samuel, 81, 84  
 Rambouillet (France), 229  
 Rapp, Christina Benzinger (George's wife), 51  
 Rapp, Frederick: born Reichert, 209;

description of, 209; Flower commissioned by, 140, 150; houses of, drawn by Lesueur, 217; imprisoned in Mount Vernon, 202; Maclure buys bonds from, 321-22, 331; New Harmony advertisement by, 140, 151; New Harmony deed signed by, 149-150; New Harmony's infrastructure designed by, 209; Owen accompanied to Pittsburgh by, 229; Owen negotiates with, 140, 151, 321; Owen threatened by, 321; photo of house in Harmony, 50; photos of houses in Economy, 208-9, 213, 219; George Rapp advised and represented by, 140, 149-50, 209; travels to New Harmony, 321, 330  
 Rapp, Gertrude (George's granddaughter), 213  
 Rapp, Johann (George's son), 50, 379n21  
 Rapp, [Johann] Georg(e): and alchemy, 223; Andreae's influence on, 53; apostolic communism of, 53; arrives in USA, 50, 379n21; Böhme's influence on, 50-51, 53; chastity of, 51, 223; Christian perfection of, 202 (*see also* Rapp, Johann Georg: religious beliefs of); and Count de Léon, 224; credibility of, 202, 224; departure for Economy, 202; departure for New Harmony, 52; description of, 202, 209; family of, 50-51, 213, 379n21; fears not to be paid by Owen, 321; first night in New Harmony, 311; Frederick, adopted son of, 140, 149, 209 (*see also* Rapp, Frederick); Harmonists founded by, 50; Harmony built by, 50; Harmony sold to Ziegler by, 52; and Harmony statue, 222-23, 396n74, 396n75; Herder's influence on, 379n36; house of, in New Harmony (*see* Number Five); houses of, in Economy, 208, 212-13, 216-17, 219-20, 223; houses of, in Economy, drawn by Lesueur, 216-17; imprisonment of, 50; Lesueur and Maclure visit, 202, 209, 212-13; love affair of, 223; and Millennium, 52, 223; New Harmony built by, 11; and New Harmony graveyard, 271; New Harmony sold to Owen by, 11,

202; Owen corresponds with, 139-40; Owen's price negotiations with, 150-51, 202, 321; portrait of, 53; registers destroyed by, 51; religious beliefs of, 50-53, 202, 223-24, 379n36, 396n75; and sexual abstinence, 51, 202, 223; Swedenborg's influence on, 379n36; Tauler's influence on, 379n36; unpopularity of, 202, 223-25  
*See also* Economy; Harmonists; Harmony, New Harmony; Rapp, Frederick  
 Rapp-Maclure Mansion (New Harmony). *See* Number Five  
 Rapp, Rosine (George's daughter), 51  
 Rappites. *See* Harmonists  
 Reading (PA), 167  
 Real del Monte (Mexico), 337  
*Recollections of New Harmony* (Kellogg), 279  
 Red River, 99  
 Reichel, Carl Gotthold, 76  
 Reichert. *See* Rapp, Frederick  
*Remembrances and Sketches* (Kellogg), 276  
 Rensselaer, Stephen van, 49, 57  
 Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (Troy), 49  
 Renwick, James, Jr., 354  
 Revivalism, 199  
*Revue Encyclopédique* (Jullien de Paris), 231  
 Rey, Gabriel, 295, 353, 399n13  
 Rhees, William Jones, 355  
 Rhode Island (state), 58, 61, 177  
 Ribeyre Island (Wabash), 259. *See also* New Harmony: Cut-off Island  
 Richmond (VA), 28, 82  
 Riedlé, Anselme, 3  
 Riley, Thomas, 191  
 Rinsma, Bauke Ritsert: lecture in New Harmony of, 405n12; ongoing research and publications of, 374n1, 374n4, 378n98, 395n53; photos by (*see* List of Illustrations). *See also* Acknowledgements; Author's Preface; Foreword  
 Rinsma, Manon, photo of brother by, xvi  
 Rittenhouse, David, 81, 92  
 Roberts, Leslie Jean, 374n4, 465  
 Robertson, William, 95, 124, 131

Robespierre, Maximilien François Marie  
Isodore de, 33  
Robson, Robert R., 370, 399n15  
Rochambeau, Jean-Baptiste-Donatien de  
Vimeur de, 191  
Rochester (NY), 54, 57  
Rochester (PA), 49  
Rochester (VT), 58  
Rocky Mountains, 83, 99  
Rome (NY), 54  
Roofless Church (New Harmony), xx-xxi  
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 33-34, 132, 135,  
376n47, 389n9  
Royalists (France), 26-27, 38  
Royal Observatory (Greenwich), 30; drawn by  
Lesueur, 32  
Royal Society of London for the  
Improvement of Natural Knowledge, 43  
Ruschenberger, William Samuel Waithman,  
237  
Rusconi, Giovanni Antonio, 224  
Rush, Benjamin, 81, 83  
Rush, William, 396n76  
Russia, 43, 353, 382n15

## S

Safe Harbor (Beaver Valley, PA), 233-34, 239;  
drawn by Lesueur, 235-240  
Saint-Germain (Paris), 26, 231  
Saint Kitts (Lesser Antilles), drawn by  
Lesueur, 7  
Saint Lawrence River, 25  
Saint Paul's Episcopal Church (Philadelphia),  
97  
Saint Petersburg (Russia), 382n15  
Saint-Simon, Claude-Henri de Rouvroy de,  
229, 231-32, 397n15; portrait of, 232  
Saint-Simonists (Paris), 231  
Saint Vincent (Lesser Antilles), drawn by  
Lesueur, 2  
Sale [*sic*], Miss. *See* Turner, Sarah  
Salem (MA), 58  
Sampson, James, 305, 346, 399n15

Sanderson, John, 82  
Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic), 119,  
191-93, 386n62, 394n20  
Saratoga (NY), Battle of, 58  
Saratoga, Lake (NY), 57  
Saratoga Springs (NY), 57  
Saturn V (Apollo 17), photo of, 362  
Savannah (GA), 38, 75, 99, 380n65  
Savannah River, 61  
Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, Karl Bernhard of,  
245, 275, 382n19, 394n9, 396n75, 398n53  
Saxony (Germany), 62  
Say, Lucy Way Sistare. *See* Sistare, Lucy Way  
Say, Thomas: arrives in New Harmony, 254;  
buried in New Harmony, 310; Carmalt's  
cousin, 162; collections of, sent to New  
Harmony, 191; death of, 338, 341,  
356-57; drawn by Chappellsmith, 320;  
drawn by Lesueur, 159, 329, 333, 341;  
Goode's comment on, 357-58; Greene  
mentions, 81; illness of, 332-33; intends  
to go to New Harmony, 181; Lesueur  
corresponds via, 403n57; Lesueur helped  
by, 89, 338, 349; Lesueur helps, 302, 338,  
357, 405n15; Lesueur's articles translated  
by, 89; Lesueur's book announced by,  
93, 404n74; Lesueur's conflict with,  
338; stays in Number Five, 275, 341;  
lives in West Street [after marriage],  
308-9, 341; and Long expedition, 89,  
99, 201; Maclure represented in court  
by, 322, 331; Maclure's library used by,  
353, 356; on *Philanthropist*, 191-92, 212,  
248, 253; Owen meets, in Philadelphia,  
149; photo of house of, 308; portrait by  
Peale of, 94; positive influence of, 233;  
publications of, 358, 405n15; reason for  
leaving Philadelphia, 185; salary in New  
Harmony, 329; Lucy Sistare marries, 193,  
306; teaches in Maclure's schools, 200,  
329, 337; Tiebout invited by, 402n20; trip  
in Pennsylvania with Lesueur and Maclure,  
162, 167, 185; trip to Florida with Maclure,  
89, 99; trip to Mexico with Maclure, 334,

337; trip to Ohio and Kentucky with  
Maclure, 295-96, 305; work on Wabash  
shells, 302, 334; works in Number Two,  
404n78  
Schär, Rudolf, 28, 36, 42, 95, 119, 375n29,  
377n75, 386n62  
Schmidt, Charles, 191-92, 248, 254, 398n53  
Schmidt, Mr. (Charles's father), 192, 398n53  
Schmitt, Harrison, 362-65  
Schneck, Jacob, 353, 430  
Schnee, David, 430  
Schnee, John, 399n15  
Schoeneck (PA), 168  
Schöner, Georg Friedrich Adolph, 35  
Schooley's Mountain (NJ), 177  
School of Industry: drawn by Lesueur, 183-  
84; Fretageot's school in Philadelphia, 106,  
124, 161; integrated in New Harmony  
community, 182, 233, 295, 306, 361,  
405n12; Piquetpal's school in Paris, 43,  
120, 124, 161, 191, 231. *See also* New  
Harmony Education Society;  
New Harmony schools  
Schroeder, Walter A., 289  
Schuylkill Falls (East Falls), 38-39, 41, 119;  
drawn by Lesueur, 39  
Schuylkill River, 38-39, 119, 167; drawn by  
Lesueur, 39  
Schwarz, Ralph Grayson, 69, 171-72, 176,  
381n77; documents photographed by, 60,  
105, 138, 320  
Scotland: Maclure's childhood in, 53, 229;  
Maclure's family in, 28, 33; Maclure visits  
schools in, 124; Moravians in, 53, 229;  
Owen's factories in, 43, 131, 133; Owen's  
school in, 134, 137-39. *See also*  
Great Britain  
Scott, Samuel H., 149  
Secretary of the Interior (USA), 353  
Seneca Lake (NY), 57  
Senefelder, Johann Nepomuk Franz Aloys, 90,  
93, 121  
*Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*  
(Sterne), 331



- Sevalla [*sic*]. *See* Zavala, Manuel  
 Seybert, Henry, 392n39  
 Seymour, Samuel, 99  
 Shakers, 47, 58, 202, 229  
 Shawnee (Indians), 11. *See also* Indians  
 Shawneetown [Old] (IL), 151, 254, 353  
 Shippingport (KY), 246-48  
 Shriver, Ludwig, 311  
 Sigoigne's Academy (Frankford), 97, 113, 386n50. *See also* Condemine, Marie-Anne Aimée  
 Silesia (Prussia), 168  
 Silliman, Benjamin, 81  
 Sirens (mythology), 3  
 Sistare, Frances, 191-93; drawn by Lesueur, 243  
 Sistare, Lucy Way (Mrs. Thomas Say): drawn by Lesueur, 243; draws like Lesueur, 330; Lesueur watercolor received from, 341; on *Philanthropist*, 191-93, 243, 248, 253-54; photo of house of [after marriage], 308; Thomas Say marries, 193, 306  
 Sistare, Sarah, 191-93; drawn by Lesueur, 243  
 Skaneateles (NY), 57  
 Skaneateles Lake (NY), 57  
*Sketch of a Plan and Method of Education* (Neef), 37, 375n23  
 Skipwith, Charles, 377n75  
 slavery, 54, 152, 155, 200, 240, 245-46, 306, 391n86. *See also* Blacks; Whites  
 Smith, Dominique, 401n54  
 Smith, Edward, house of, drawn by Lesueur, 92  
 Smith, James Elishama, 199  
 Smith, William "Strata" (geologist), 76, 381n81  
 Smith, William (provost), 38, 40  
 Smithland (KY), 290; drawn by Lesueur, 287  
 Smithsonian Institution (Washington, DC), 353-57, 405n9; engraving of, 355  
 Smithsonian Institution Archives, 357  
 Smithsonian Libraries: reproduction of *ANSP Journal* from, 85-87, 122; reproduction of Robert Dale Owen's portrait from, 357  
 Smithson, James, 405n9  
 Snap (Lesueur's dog), 305, 348  
*Snares and Quakeries of the Two Sects of Saint-Simon and Owen* (Fourier), 229  
 Socialists, 43, 120, 156, 229-32  
 Society for Elementary Instruction (De Gérando), 230-31  
 Society of Friends. *See* Quakers  
 Society of Natural History (Paris), 100  
 South Africa, 4, 259  
 South Dakota (state), 358  
 Sowerby, James, 76  
 Spain: climate in, 105; Comte to join Maclure in, 231; counter-revolution in, 106; France invades, 106; Maclure's collections from, 353; Maclure's educational project in, 47, 104-5, 131, 161, 391n4; Maclure's safety in, 106, 124; Piquetal to join Maclure in, 124; revolution in, 104; Wabash wine like that of, 259  
 Speakman, John, 178, 194, 260  
 Speakman, Taylor & Co., 371  
 Spencer family farm (IL), 264  
 Springfield (IN), 151  
 Springfield (MA), 58  
 Springfield Mine (MO), 280; drawn by Lesueur, 291  
 Squier, Ephraim George, 81, 301  
 Staunton, Phineas, Jr., 53  
 St. Francis Xavier Cathedral (Vincennes), 10  
 St. Louis (MO), 83, 280, 289-90, 382n19  
 St. Patrick's Cathedral (New York), 354  
 Stanford University (CA), 84, 302  
 Stans (Switzerland), 34  
 State Boundary Commission (USA-Canada), 48, 357  
*Statement Regarding the New Lanark Establishment* (Owen), 137  
 Staunton, Phineas, Jr., 53  
 Steamboats (Lesueur), 197, 225, 242, 245, 286-87  
 Ste. Genevieve (MO), drawn by Lesueur, 286  
 Steinhauer, Henry, 76, 381n81; portrait of, 61  
 Stephen Girard College (Philadelphia), 183  
 Sterne, Laurence, 331  
 Steubenville (OH), 234, 240; drawn by Lesueur, 241  
 Stevenson, Ebenezer, 332  
 Stouchsburg (PA), 167  
 Straw, Zachary, photo by, 151  
 Stroud, Patricia Tyson, 248, 383n40  
 Stroudsburg (PA), 177  
 Strutt, Joseph, 136  
 Superior, Lake, 290  
 Swabia (Germany), 54, 213  
 Swainson, William John, 85  
 Swedenborg, Emanuel, 379n36, 389n9  
 Swiss Consulta, 375n24  
 Swiss Revolution, 34  
 Switzerland: Agassiz from, 85; French troops massacre village in, 34; or Helvetic Republic, 34, 375n24; Maclure travels to, 33, 104; Maclure's collections from, 353; Monnot from, 259; R. D. Owen studies in, 137; Pestalozzi's portrait in, 35; Swabia borders on, 54; Zinzendorf evangelizes in, 62  
 Sydney (Australia), 48  
*Sylva Sylvarum: Or a Natural History in Ten Centuries* (Bacon), 21, 377n64  
 Symmes, John Cleves, 240, 245
- ## T
- Tait, William, 233  
 Talleyrand, Charles-Maurice de, 37, 377n69  
 Tappan, Benjamin, 240, 330, 403n57  
 Tappan, Betsey Lord (widow of Eliphalet Frazer), 240  
 Tartar (mythology), 3  
 Tasmania, 4, 25  
 Tauler, Johann, 379n36  
 Taylor, Fauntleroy and Co., 371  
 Taylor, William George, 371  
 Teague, Margaret (Mrs. Gerard Troost), 400n32  
 Tecumseh (Shawnee chief), 11  
 Tennessee (state), 357-58

- Texas (state), 21  
 Thaler, Charles, 149  
 Thespian Society (New Harmony), 114  
*Thomas Say: Early American Naturalist* (Weiss & Ziegler), 149  
 Thomson, Thomas, 392n39  
 Thorpe, Jim. *See* Mauch Chunk  
 Tiebout, Cornelius, 290, 306, 338, 370, 399n15, 402n20, 404n78  
 Tilghman, William, 381n4  
 Timor, Island of (Indonesia), 3  
 Tippecanoe (Battle Ground, IN), Battle of, 10-11  
 Tippecanoe River (IN), 12  
 Titans (mythology), 3, 17, 200  
*To the People of the United States* (Maclure), 382n14  
 Transactions of the APS (Philadelphia), 76, 84, 86  
*Trasformazioni, Le* (Dolce), 224  
*Travels of Charles A. Lesueur in North America* (Hamy), 12, 376n42; reproduction of Lesueur's map in, 366  
*Treatise on Domestic and Agricultural Association* (Fourier), 229  
 Trienio Liberal (Spanish Revolution), 105-6  
 Trinity (Cairo, IL), drawn by Lesueur, 284  
 Troost, Gerard: aided by Say in Philadelphia, 89; appointed Tennessee's state geologist, 358; becomes member of Education Society, 295; cofounder and first president of ANSP, 89, 161; collects Indian artifacts, 296; drawn by Lesueur, 159, 281, 289, 293, 332, 335; Fretageot criticized by, 331; geological map of, 358; geological work with Lesueur, 280, 289-90, 352, 358; interest in fossil fuels, 161; leaves New Harmony, 329, 332, 334, 358; leaves Philadelphia, 178, 181, 357; Lesueur helped by, 334; Lesueur shares apartment and house with, 272, 275, 334, 400n32; Maclure criticized by, 330; marriage and remarriage of, 400n32; mineralogy classes of, 113; D. D. Owen trained by, 358, 361; Peale's portrait of, 89; publications of, with Lesueur, 289-90, 334, 352, 358, 401n60, 405n17; is reason for Lesueur's coming to New Harmony, 334; reference to Sterne by, 331; salary in New Harmony of, 329; trip in Pennsylvania with Lesueur and Maclure; 161-62, 167, 185; trip to Illinois and Missouri with Lesueur and Kellogg, 279-80, 289-90, 353  
 Troy (IN), 249  
 Troy (NY), 49, 57  
 Troy Lyceum of Natural History (NY), 48, 381n1  
 Turner, Sarah, 191, 248, 253; drawn by Lesueur, 243  
 turtles (Lesueur), 54, 90, 358; drawings of, 359; photo of, 186  
 Twain, Mark (Samuel Langhorne Clemens), 284  
 Twigg, Virginia Poulard Dupalais. *See* Dupalais, Virginia Poulard  
 Twigg, Virginia Dupalais (Virginia's granddaughter), 192, 394n19  
 Twigg, William Augustus (Virginia's husband), 192-93, 394n19, 400n32  
 Tyawapatia [*sic*] Bottom. *See* Tywappity Bottom  
 Tywappity Bottom (MO), 280, 289; drawn by Lesueur, 288
- U**
- Uniformitarianism (geology), 47-48  
 Union (USA), Maclure's references to, 36, 42, 104, 114, 124, 162. *See also* USA  
 Unitarians, 41, 194  
 Unitas Fratrum. *See* Moravians  
 United Kingdom, 33, 124. *See also* England; Great Britain  
 United States Geological Survey (USGS), 353-54, 356, 362  
 United States Post Office, 389n47  
 United States of America. *See* USA  
 University of Houston-Clear Lake (TX), reproduction of *New Atlantis* from, 21  
 University of Glasgow (Scotland), 392n39  
 University of Missouri (Columbia), 289  
 University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill), 385n26  
 USA (United States of America): ancient rocks in, 289; APS, oldest institution of, 81; best field of experiment on Earth, 161; consuls of (*see* Barnet, Isaac Cox; Montgomery, Robert); black population in (*see* Blacks); border with Canada (*see under* Canada); Congress of, 353-54; consuls of France in (*see* Consulate of France); economic depression in, 123; federal government of, 49, 99-100, 103, 353, 362, 385n16, 405n9; first nonsectarian school in, 109; Harrison, president of, 11, 17; imports gun powder from Europe, 117; Jefferson, president of, 81-83; Lesueur follows Maclure to, 25-26, 28, 87, 185-86, 464; Lesueur and Maclure forward baggage to, 28, 90; Lesueur and Maclure's great tour through, 47-77; Lesueur and Maclure's influence on geology in, 48-49, 57, 81, 354, 357, 361-62; Lesueur publishes in, 84-90, 93-94, 121-22, 124, 289-90, 338-39, 358, 360-61; Lesueur's most amazing things in, 54, 82; lithography in, 90, 93, 121-23, 387n78, 387n80; Louisiana Purchase of, 11, 27, 83, 382n14; Maclure, representative of, 26-27, 83; Maclure returns to, 28, 124, 337; Maclure sends teachers to, 28, 36-37, 41-42, 131, 229, 376n53, 386n62; Maclure's family in, 33, 265, 337; Maclure's geological maps of, 25, 49, 54, 76, 83, 93, 354, 361; Maclure's preference for, 36, 124, 161-62; map of Lesueur's travels in, 46; David McClure's trade with, 28; Neef's arrival in, 37, 377n85, 378n88, 398n62; Owen goes to, 140, 161; Owen's ideas spread in, 162; Phiquepal returns to, 124; Phiquepal takes refuge in, 38; Rapp arrives in, 50, 202, 379n21; revivalism in, 199;

Senate of, 353, 382n14. *See also* North America; Union  
 USA Army, 273  
 USA History, Lesueur's interest in:  
     Declaration of Independence, 79, 82; Fort Pitt, 194, 196-97; Founding Fathers, 79, 82, 91, 127, 164; Governor Harrison, 10, 16; Wars of Independence, 57-59, 69, 71, 162-64, 167  
 USGS. *See* United States Geological Survey  
 Utica (NY), 57  
 Utilitarianism (Bentham), 42, 378n91  
*Utopia* (More), 232  
 Utopias. *See* Albion; Bethlehem; Condé-sur-Vesgre; Cooperating Society of Allegheny County; Economy; English Prairie; Friendly Association of Mutual Interests; Harmony; Nashobah; Nazareth; New Harmony; Moravians; Motherwell Community; Orbiston or New Babylon Community; Queenwood Harmony Hall Community; Schoeneck; Shakers; Wanborough; Yellow Springs

## V

Vail, Robert W. G., 191-93  
 Valle's Diggings [Valles Mines] (MO), 290  
 Valley Forge (PA), 162-164, 166-67; drawn by Lesueur, 164; photos of, 166-67  
 Van Buren, Martin, 401n52  
 Van Rensselaer, Stephen, 49, 57  
 Vansittart, Nicholas, 391n78  
 Vaughan, John, 124, 387n94  
 Vaux, William S., 24  
 Vendée (France), 38  
 Venice (Italy), 224  
 Verne, Jules, 240  
 Vernon (NY), 57  
 Vicksburg (MS), 360  
 Vieillard, Sophie Félicité (Lesueur's cousin), 376n40  
 Vien, Joseph-Marie, 386n57  
 Vignères, Jean-Eugène, engraving of Saint-

Simon by, 232  
 Vigo, Francis, 394n12  
 Village Green - Green Ridge (PA), 41, 378n86  
 Village of Unity and Mutual Cooperation (Owen), 275. *See* New Harmony  
 Vincennes (IN), 10-11, 151, 202, 373n4, 399n14  
 Vincennes, drawn by Lesueur: Leonard Ackley's houses, 10; John Badollet's house, 14, 16; David Bonner's steam mill, 10; Broadway House, 14; courthouses, 10; ferry boathouse, 14; Fort Knox, 14; William Harrison's house, 16; Knox County Jail, 10; Main Street area, 10; marching field, 10; Methodist Church, 10; Presbyterian Church, 10; rampart, 14; St. Francis Xavier Cathedral, 10; university, 10; Wabash at, 14  
 Vincennes State Historic Site, 14  
 Virginia (state), 28, 33, 81, 82, 382n15  
 Volney, Constantin-François Chasseboeuf, comte de, 83, 230, 382n15  
 Vosges (France), 132  
 Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Lands. *See* Baudin expedition  
*Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Lands: History* (Péron & Lesueur), 27  
*Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Lands: Natural History* (Lesueur), 90

## W

Wabash River: artifacts of, 301; called Belle Rivière, 12; color of, 12; Cut-off and, 259; drawn by Lesueur, 13, 14, 255, 283, 297, 303; fauna and flora surrounding, 11-12; fish of, 305, 334; forms west boundary of Indiana, 11; Harmonists move to, 52, 54, 202; importance for Lesueur, 11-12, 17, 179, 301-2, 305, 334, 358; Maclure and Lesueur move to, 161, 185; maps showing, 20, 267, 366; meaning of Indian name, 12; mussels of, 302, 305, 334; New Harmony and, 11, 140, 362; New Harmony ferry

across, 259; and Ohio, 11-12; Owen buys Harmonist land on, 139-40, 149-51, 161-62, 202, 212, 401n45; *Philanthropist* to go up, 200, 248, 253; photos of, 8-9, 15, 187, 278, 282, 299, 336-37; and Tippecanoe River, 12; turtles of, 186, 358-59; Vincennes and, 11; and White River, 12; wine of, 259  
 Waldersbach (France), 389n9  
 Waldman family, 52  
 Wales, 76  
 Walker, John, 140  
 Walnut Hills (Vicksburg, MS), 360-61  
 Wanborough (IL), 143-44, 146-47, 151;  
     Cauliflower Lodge in, 144, 147; drawn by Lesueur, 143, 144, 146; Hall's tavern in, 143, 146; photo of, 147; families join Owen, 143, 274  
 Warren, Josiah, 321, 370, 378n86  
 Warren, Leonard, 374n1  
 Wars of Independence (USA), 57-59, 69, 71, 163-64, 167, 199. *See also* American Revolution; battles; Declaration of Independence; Founding Fathers; USA History, Lesueur's interest in  
 Waterloo (Belgium), Battle of, 25, 27, 135  
 Washington, George, 162, 164, 166-67, 191, 231  
 Washington (DC): Schär's school near, 36, 119, 386n62; Alphonse's schools near, 36, 386n62; Smithsonian building in, 353-54; Capitol in, 382n15  
 Watté, Jean-Pierre, 296, 301  
 Wattles, James Miles, 405n12  
 Wattles, James Otis, 144, 370, 405n12  
 Way, Abishai, 149  
 Weingartner, Wallrath, map of, 399n6  
 Weimerskirch, Philip J., 387n80  
 Weiss, Harry B., 149, 333  
 Wellcome Trust, Wellcome Library (London), reproduction of Bentham engraving from, 233  
 Werner, Abraham Gottlob, 47, 379n5  
 Western Museum (Cincinnati), 202, 240

*Western Navigator* (Cumings), 201, 395n54  
*Western Pilot* (Cumings), 395n54  
West Indies 54, 192, 378n98. *See also* Antilles  
West Lafayette (IN), 315, 361  
*Westminster Review* (Bentham), 43  
West Union (IN), 202  
West Virginia (state), 244-45, 358  
Wheeling (WV), 234  
White County (IL), 151  
Whitefield, George, 62, 179  
Whitefield House (Nazareth), 168; photo of, 179  
Whitehall (NY), 58  
White River (IN), 12  
Whites, 11, 155, 245-46. *See also* Blacks; Indians; slavery  
Whitwell, Stedman, 192, 239, 248, 253-54, 397n36  
Wilkinson's Diggings (Mine Lamotte, MO), 352  
William Henry Smith Memorial Library (IHS), 4, 162  
*William Penn* (steamboat), 225  
William the Conqueror (duke and king), 354  
Wilmington (DE), 33, 114, 117, 167  
Wilson, Alexander, 81, 84, 86, 89  
Wilson, Matthew, 193, 195  
Wilson, William E., 152  
Winning, John, reproduction of New Lanark engraving by, 133  
Wisconsin (state), 11, 353, 358  
Wistar, Caspar, 81-83, 113, 145, 381n4  
Wistar family, 112  
Wolf, Salomon, 342  
Wolle, Jacob, 74  
Womelsdorf (PA), 167  
Wood, George, 399n15  
Woodman, Constant, 162  
Worcester (MA), 58  
Working Men's Institute (New Harmony): archives of, 38, 104, 149, 162, 237, 254, 365, 371, 378n98, 394n17; founded by Maclure, 365; photo of, xii, 328; reproduction of Community account

book in, 254; reproduction of Fretageot's portrait in, 316; reproduction of Hawkins's painting in, 151; reproduction of Maclure's journal in, 136; reproduction of Maclure's map in, 49; reproduction of Maclure's portrait in, 230; reproduction of Milbert's lithograph in, 43; reproduction of Neef's portrait in, 37; reproduction of *New-Harmony Gazette* in, 154; reproduction of Owen's deed in, 150  
Wright, Benjamin, 57  
Wright, Frances: and George Flower, 145; Nashoba experiment of, 307; and *New-Harmony Gazette*, 152; portrait of, 306; and Saint-Simon, 231  
Württemberg (Germany), 202  
Wyck Historic House (Germantown): photos of, 110, 112; reproduction of Lesueur drawing of, 111

## X

Xenia (OH), 295

## Y

Yellow Springs (OH), 240, 295  
Yellow Tavern (New Harmony): accounts of, 254, 371; drawn by Lesueur, 156, 261, 293, 335; Lesueur stays in, 254, 259, 398n1; in prospectus, 140; Owen stays in, 275; smoke house of, drawn by Lesueur, 156, 257, 280. *See also* Number Three [which served as a tavern as well]  
Yorick (in *Sentimental Journey*), 331  
Young, James Hamilton, 383n55  
Yverdon (Switzerland), 33-34, 41, 104, 231, 376n45

## Z

Zavala, Manuel, 337, 404n70  
Zentralbibliothek (Zürich), reproduction of Pestalozzi's portrait from, 35

Zeus (mythology), 3  
Ziegler, Abraham, 52  
Ziegler, Grace M., 149, 333  
Zinzendorf, Nikolaus Ludwig von: evangelizing of, 53, 62; founds Herrnhut, 62; house in Nazareth of, 74, 168-69, 171. *See also* Moravians  
Zürich (Switzerland), 34-35

## CHRONOLOGICAL AND THEMATIC INDEX

*The index of persons, places, institutions and works mentioned does not contain all the references relating to Charles-Alexandre Lesueur and William Maclure, which have been organized thematically and in chronologic order to provide the reader with a clear and comprehensive overview of the information treated in this book.*

### EARLY YEARS

Charles-Alexandre Lesueur: called Le Sueur 49, 86, 113, 302, 305; Christian name explained, 28, 33, 376n37, 376n42, 376n43; childhood in France, 224, 386n57; family in France, 99, 181, 376n41, 376n43, 384n64, 393n48, 395n21; life with his father in Paris, 25

William Maclure: childhood in Scotland, 53, 229; family in Great Britain, 28-29, 33; family in the USA, 33, 265, 337

### EARLY CAREER

Charles-Alexandre Lesueur: school years and training as a cartographer and a painter, 48, 119, 224, 386n57; scientific training during the Baudin expedition, 3, 25; mortally wounded on Timor, 3; forced to wear tin leggings, 3; becomes Georges Cuvier's student in Paris, 3, 26, 48, 357, 361; meets William Maclure, 26-27, 349; travels in France, 4; studies animals with François Péron, 224; defends the city of Paris, 26; receives the *Fleur de Lys* decoration, 26; continues to receive a state pension, 25-27, 99, 103, 182; decides to leave Paris, 27

William Maclure: works for firms in London and the USA, 28, 82; owns a timber company, 33; becomes rich thanks to the tobacco trade, 28; becomes a member of the APS, 25, 83, 93; is influenced by Thomas Jefferson, 47, 233; corresponds with Jefferson, 80, 82-83; is sent to France by Jefferson, 26-27, 83, 230; plays a role in the Louisiana Purchase, 27, 83, 382n14; publishes *To the People of the United States*, 382n14; publishes a *Geological Map of the USA*, 25, 49, 54, 76, 83, 93, 354, 361; travels in Europe, 25, 82-83, 95, 104-5; writes his European journals, 43, 47-48, 124, 136-37, 139, 161-62, 232, 378n98; shows interest in stars and planets, 48; has connections in France, 27, 230-32; has connections in London, 43; lives in Paris, 26-27, 95, 104-5

### PESTALOZZIAN SCHOOLS

William Maclure: travels to Switzerland, 33, 104; meets Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, 33, 35-36, 41, 104, 375n23, 376n45; meets Joseph Neef, 37, 375n23; sends Neef to the USA, 41-42, 377n85, 378n88; establishes a Pestalozzian school in Paris, 41, 131; sends other Pestalozzian teachers to the USA, 28, 35-37, 41-42, 119, 131, 230, 376n53, 377n62, 377n75, 386n62; enquires about Lancasterian and Pestalozzian schools in Boston, 386n61; plans experimental farming schools in Spain, 47, 104-5, 131, 161, 391n4

William Maclure: purchases land in Spain, 106; wants Guillaume Phiquepal to join him in Spain, 124; wants Auguste Comte to join him in Spain, 231; fears for his safety in Spain, 106, 124; has a negative experience with his schools in Europe, 106, 161; wants to bring his farming schools to the USA, 36, 114, 119, 124, 161-62, 391n4; authorizes Marie Fretageot to use the Bible in her school, 119; is portrayed with Guillaume Phiquepal and his students by Jacques-Gérard Milbert in Paris, 43, 388n102

#### MACLURE'S TRAVELS WITH LESUEUR

Charles-Alexandre Lesueur: follows Maclure to the USA, 25-26, 87, 185-86, 464 ; writes short journals, 54, 75; draws in sketchbooks, 57, 193, 253, 331-32, 334, 403n58 (*see also* List of Illustrations); comments on Bethlehem, 75. *See* map of Lesueur's travels in the USA, 46

William Maclure: writes his American journals, 47, 49-51, 54; is mentioned in the *Sun Inn Day Book*, 75, 380n57, 381n82, 381n85

Charles-Alexandre Lesueur and William Maclure: establish a contract, 3-6, 25, 89, 95; forward baggage to the USA, 28, 90; depart from France, 25-26, 77, 87, 119, 185-86; visit England, 4, 28-33, 42-43, 375n29; travel to the Lesser Antilles, 1-2, 7; are interested in volcanoes, 3; are precursors, 47; make a great tour through the USA, 47-77, 378n98; travel to Pittsburgh, 47, 49, 182, 191, 193, 394n2; visit Harmony, 49-54; stay in New York, 57, 58; visit Bethlehem, 53-54, 60-77, 161; meet Henry Steinhauer, 61, 76; return to Philadelphia, 61, 77

#### RESIDENCE IN PHILADELPHIA

Charles-Alexandre Lesueur: arrives in Pennsylvania, 47, 49, 81; settles in Philadelphia, 81-82, 89; stays for nine years in Philadelphia, 17; becomes a member of the APS, 76, 81, 381n1, 381n4; becomes a member of the ANSP, 81, 381n1; has problems with English, 88, 89, 272, 334, 338; shows interest in Thomas Jefferson, 79, 82, 84, 91; has several reasons to prolong his stay in Philadelphia, 94-95; is active as a printer and lithographer, 90, 93-94, 121-23, 306, 349; is needed in Philadelphia by the ANSP members, 95; prefers not to be published in the *ANSP Journal*, 88, 124; has his home near the ANSP, 162; several changes of address in Philadelphia, 381n88, 387n94; has a calling card, 33; has his portrait painted by Charles Willson Peale, 24, 85, 94; manages a natural history warehouse, 95, 104, 123-24, 185; rents a storeroom in the ANSP building, 124, 191, 387n94, 393n1; opens an academy of drawing, 100, 384n10; works for schools and gives private lessons, 106, 113, 114; has many students, 38, 100, 106, 113, 114, 123, 162, 279, 361; wants to join the Long expedition, 83, 99-100, 103, 385n16, 385n20; determines the USA-Canada boundary, 48-49, 103, 201, 357, 385n16; is assisted by Marcellin Hentz, 103, 119, 385n26; feels unhappy in Philadelphia, 99, 124; improves his situation with the help of Marie Fretageot, 121; works with Fretageot, 106, 119, 121, 123, 162, 337; works with Reuben Haines, 123; works for Constant Woodman, 162; intends to leave Philadelphia, 17, 103, 124, 162, 178; has sufficient income in Philadelphia, 124, 383n61, 384n64

William Maclure: is president of the ANSP, 162, 392n10; rents a storeroom for Lesueur, 124, 191, 387n94, 393n1; starts the *ANSP Journal*, 93, 230; uses his press for the *ANSP Journal*, 95; makes a trip to Florida with George Ord and Thomas Say, 89, 99; has his portrait made by Charles Willson Peale, 24, 94

## MACLURE'S DEPARTURE FOR EUROPE

William Maclure: departs for Europe, 94, 384n10, 387n94; has projects in France, 47; travels in France, 104; is visited by Saint-Simon, 231; hires Auguste Comte for his school in Paris, 231; is under police surveillance, 231; meets Marie Fretageot, 106; lets Fretageot stay in his house, 106; sends Fretageot to Philadelphia, 104; visits Charles Fourier, 232; leaves Paris, 104-5; visits the United Kingdom, 124, 127, 137, 139, 161.

## CORRESPONDENCE

Charles-Alexandre Lesueur: corresponds with Frédéric Cuvier, 18, 99-100; corresponds with Georges Cuvier (*see* corresponds with the Professors in Paris); corresponds with Anselme Desmarest, 87, 89, 100, 103, 113, 124, 334, 383n58, 384n2, 384n9, 384n10, 385n16, 385n20, 387n83, 388n97; corresponds with his father, 26-27, 95, 384n2, 395n21; corresponds with William Maclure, 28, 121-23; 338, 349; 375n35, 378n90; corresponds with Maclure via Marie Fretageot, 121, 376n36, 387n94; receives letters from Maclure which do not survive, 376n36; corresponds with George Ord, 12, 88; corresponds with the Professors in Paris, 93-94, 100, 103, 179-80, 185-86, 334, 385n16, 385n17, 388n97; corresponds via Thomas Say, 338, 403n57; is a corresponding member of the MNHN, 88, 94, 99, 124, 185; sends objects and notes to the Museum in Paris, 93-94, 180, 185, 334; writes irregularly or very little, 76, 86-90, 121, 124, 333-34; is accused of being negligent, 104, 121, 388n97; writes little about himself, 333

William Maclure: corresponds with Marie Fretageot, 119-21, 181, 231, 306, 377n75, 377n85, 386n47, 386n61, 390n70, 392n23, 393n1, 401n45, 404n78; expresses worries about C.-A. Lesueur, 104; receives letters from Lesueur, 28, 121-23, 338, 349, 375n35, 378n90; writes to Lesueur via Fretageot and others, 121, 376n36, 387n94; is difficult to read when he writes in French, 376n36

## LESUEUR'S RELATION WITH FRANCE

Charles-Alexandre Lesueur: has a complicated but lasting relationship with France, 99, 124; requests extra funding, 99-100, 103, 180; is little aided by France, 85-86, 100, 103, 124; receives support from the Professors in Paris, 100, 103; is funded by the French government, 85, 100, 103, 123, 162, 182, 384n64, 385n16, 385n18; prefers to be published in France, 88, 179, 181-82; is seldom published in France, 85-88, 124, 179, 182, 359-60; decides not to return to France immediately, 193; intends to return to France, 17, 103, 124, 161-62, 178, 349, 400n32, 403n57; finally return to France, 353, 357

## LESUEUR'S FAMILY LIFE

Charles-Alexandre Lesueur: has a love life, 193; is the guardian of several children, 191-93, 200, 240, 243, 394n17, 394n20, 397n36; has a maid, 200, 394n12; lives with the Dupalais family, 338, 394n19, 400n32; is called Virginia's "uncle," 191, 394n9, 394n19; lives with Gerard Troost and his family, 272, 275, 334, 400n32

## MACLURE'S RETURN TO THE UNITED STATES

William Maclure: makes his last trip through the United Kingdom, 124, 127, 139; visits New Lanark, 136-37, 139-40; meets Robert Owen, 127, 139, 161-62, 182, 230, 378n97; writes about Owen's acquisition of New Harmony, 391n4; meets Jeremy Bentham in London, 42; is influenced by Bentham, 42, 120, 229-230, 232; is influenced by Bacon, 36, 156, 229-30, 232-33, 361-62; develops his own philosophy, 42, 52, 54, 81, 120, 156, 161, 229-33, 305-6, 378n93; is interested in social works and cooperative villages, 49, 229-30; returns to Philadelphia, 161-62, 337; stays in New York, 57, 58, 161-62; has a manservant, 162; makes excursions with ANSP members, 89, 159, 161-62, 167, 178, 185; visits Nazareth with his friends, 77, 161, 168-77; comments on Nazareth, 77; meets Charles Thomas Jackson, 177

## REASONS FOR DEPARTURE FROM PHILADELPHIA

Charles-Alexandre Lesueur: meets Robert Owen in Philadelphia, 162, 181, 378n97; doubts Owen's success, 17, 182, 185, 349; is afraid to become poor, 99, 181; is encouraged by Marie Fretageot to follow Owen, 185, 349; is influenced by Gerard Troost and his departure, 178, 334; has a meditative nature, 179, 181; has multiple reasons for going to New Harmony, 12, 106, 161, 179-82, 185-86, 338, 349; wants to visit the Gulf of Mexico, 95, 99, 103, 179-80, 186; needs a practical home-base for exploring North America, 179; is not William Maclure's victim, 185-86; departs from Philadelphia, 179, 185, 191-92, 193, 254, 357-58

William Maclure: comments on real-estate prices in Philadelphia, 233; is encouraged by Marie Fretageot to follow Robert Owen, 162, 182; joins forces with Owen, 17, 43, 47, 77, 129, 131, 151, 161-62, 182; decides to go to New Harmony, 182, 184; transfers his schools to New Harmony, 182, 233, 254; brings ANSP members to New Harmony, 233; travels on the *Philanthropist*, 191, 193, 200-202, 229, 233-34, 239-40, 245, 248, 253-54; makes a trip with Marie Fretageot to Beaver, 234, 237

## DEPARTURE FOR NEW HARMONY

William Maclure and Charles-Alexandre Lesueur: make their move to the Wabash River, 161, 185; travel to Pittsburgh, 47, 49, 182, 191, 193, 394n2; visit Economy, 54, 202, 209, 212-13, 224

Charles-Alexandre Lesueur: travels to the American frontier, 11, 18, 161, 185; comments on Fort Pitt, 194; visits the Pittsburgh fish market, 194; travels on the *Philanthropist*, 191-93, 200-202, 229, 234, 239-40, 245, 247-48, 253-54; visits Virginia Dupalais and Cecilia Noël in Pittsburgh, 239; is on the Ohio River, 49, 191, 200-201, 289; organizes hunting parties, 234; is described by Robert Dale Owen, 395n53

Maclure and Lesueur are mentioned in the *New-Harmony Gazette* upon their arrival, 254



## RESIDENCE IN NEW HARMONY

Charles-Alexandre Lesueur: arrives in New Harmony, 11-12, 254, 259; stays in the Yellow Tavern, 254, 259, 398n1; lives in the brick church, 272, 334, 400n32; lives with the Dupalais children, 338, 394n19, 400n32; lives with Gerard Troost and his family, 272, 275, 334, 400n32; visits the English Prairie, 143-44, 145-46; makes a trip to Illinois and Missouri with Gerard Troost and Charles Kellogg, 279-80, 289-90, 353; joins the Education Society, 295; is employed in the New Harmony schools, 186, 277, 279, 349; reputation as a teacher, 103-4, 113, 317; is the first teacher of Miner Kellogg, 276, 279; works for the ANSP in New Harmony, 193, 394n20; reacts to events in New Harmony, 12, 18, 332-34; draws a map of New Harmony, 20, 366; works for the theater, 114; has a conflict with William Maclure, 178, 338, 349; dislikes Marie Fretageot, 334, 338, 349; asks Maclure for compensation, 349, 404n77; asks Reuben Haines for help, 404n77; is offered a job by Judge Tappan, 403n57; asks Maclure the extended use of his house, 349; works in Number Two with Cornelius Tiebout and Thomas Say, 262, 404n78; has a conflict with Say, 337-38; says “God bless my soul”, 305; is depicted in New Harmony, 105, 305, 320, 348; has three dogs, 305, 348; is ill in New Harmony, 358. *See also* Lesueur’s scientific work

William Maclure: stays in the Yellow Tavern, 398n1; lives in Number Five, 275; helps finance the Community of Equality, 321-22, 329; buys property for the Education Society, 295, 305, 321-22, 330-31, 403n36; buys land in Illinois and Indiana, 390n70, 390n72; makes a trip with Thomas Say to Ohio and Kentucky, 295-96, 305; invites Cornelius Tiebout to join them, 306, 402n20; invites his siblings to join him in New Harmony, 337; has the money Robert Owen needs, 305-6, 321; buys bonds from Frederick Rapp, 321-22, 331; quarrels with Owen over New Harmony, 18, 321-22, 329, 331; ends his partnership with Owen, 17-18, 50, 320-22; warns others against Owen, 321, 331; publishes a pamphlet in local newspapers, 321; sues Owen, 151, 322, 329-31; is represented in court by Thomas Say, 322, 331; obtains a quarter of New Harmony, 295, 305, 321-22, 329-31, 390n72, 403n36; is criticized by Joseph Neef and Gerard Troost, 330-31; has a liaison with Marie Fretageot, 331; contributes financially to the New Harmony Community, 321-22, 329; calculates his total expenses on New Harmony, 329, 403n37, 403n45; reorganizes his New Harmony schools, 320, 337; plans to create the Orphan’s Manual Training School, 337; wants to return to his initial plan, 337; makes a trip with Thomas Say to Mexico, 334, 337; rents out houses in New Harmony, 330, 338; has a store in New Harmony, 262, 404n78; is accused of unkind treatment of his protégés, 330; publishes the *Disseminator of Useful Knowledge*, 337, 404n68; publishes his *Opinions on Various Subjects*, 382n15; leaves New Harmony, 337-38, 361; lets Marie Fretageot supervise his estate, 337; has a conflict with C.-A. Lesueur who asks for compensation, 178, 338, 349, 404n77; accepts to let Lesueur stay in his house, 349, 394n19

## FINAL YEARS

Charles-Alexandre Lesueur: explains he is away from Europe for too long, 349; wants to study lithography in Paris, 349; is accused of wasting time in New Harmony, 357; has his sculpture made by Joseph Mezzara, 394n13 (*see* Foreword)

William Maclure: owns library and collections used by Lesueur, Say and the Owens, 353, 356; donates library to the ANSP after Say’s death, 356, 393n1; founds the WMI, 365; is honored by Samuel Morton at the ANSP, 374n1

Maclure and Lesueur influence geology in the USA, 48-49, 57, 81, 354, 357, 361-62

## LESUEUR'S SCIENTIFIC WORK

Charles-Alexandre Lesueur: importance of, for American geology, 48-49, 57, 81, 354, 357, 361-62; is a methodical zoologist, 25, 48, 83, 85-86; and archaeology, 84, 86, 296, 298-303, 385n20; and conchology, 25, 86, 89, 99, 124; and entomology, 185, 383n43, 405n15; and geology, 48-49, 54, 95, 123-24, 178, 185, 289-90, 361-62, 464 (*see also* Amos Eaton; David Dale Owen, Richard Owen, Gerard Troost); and herpetology, 54, 90, 186, 358-59; and ichthyology, 54, 76, 81, 86, 89, 93, 95, 122, 124, 383n58; and paleontology, 47-48, 86, 290, 357-58, 360-62, 464; studies *Actiniidae*, 87; studies *Beroidae*, 124; studies *Botryllus*, 90; studies *Bryozoans*, 290, 361; studies *Centrarchus Aeneus*, 122; studies *Chondropterygii*, 93, 124; studies *Esocidae*, 122; studies *medusae*, 85, 90, 224, 357; studies *Pyrosoma*, 90; studies *Raja Giorna*, 124; studies *Sciaena*, 122; studies *Stephanomia*, 90, 124; studies zinc ores, 290, 401n60; trains geologists in the USA, 357; works as a land surveyor, 12, 48, 332, 357-58, 361; studies the Mississippi River, 202, 280, 289-90, 301; studies the Wabash River, 12, 179, 301-2, 305, 334, 358; works with Amos Eaton, 48-49, 357; works with John Godman, 84-85; works with the fruits of the Lewis and Clark expedition, 83; works with George Ord, 88-89; works with David Dale Owen, 290, 302-5, 353, 358, 361; works with Richard Owen, 114, 295, 302-5, 358; works with Thomas Say, 89, 254, 295, 302, 329, 334, 337-38, 349, 358; works with Gerard Troost, 280, 289-90, 352, 358; writes book on ichthyology, 93, 306, 337-39, 357, 404n74, 404n78

Charles-Alexandre Lesueur's publications: *American Ichthyology*, 337-39; *American Ichthyology* announced by Thomas Say, 93, 404n74; assistance of Thomas Say and George Ord, 88-89, 334; lithographs in the *ANSP Journal*, 122, 387n78, 387n80; printed geological work, 289-90, 352, 401n60, 411, 464; printed paleontological work, 84, 290, 360-61, 464; scientific articles and illustrations, 84-87, 90, 93-94, 122, 124, 290, 358, 360, 380n41, 380n42, 383n42, 383n43, 383n44, 383n55, 401n60. *See also* Bibliography: Publications and Contributions by C.-A. Lesueur during his Stay in America

*"I was naturally drawn to the Cape [of Le Havre], and it was a pleasure to find myself in the midst of its rubble, excavating and extracting fossils. In 1814 I got the idea to reveal their forms. I had already collected and drawn some samples of fossils and sketched the cliffs several times, including a few cross-sections, when this work was interrupted by my departure for the United States. After my return to the spot I had abandoned in 1815, I joyfully began exploring it again. The successive rockslides that had taken place during my twenty-two-year absence, and also after my return, the most recent being in 1841, causing the removal of the semaphores, had changed the shape in many ways. [...] The table [I have made] shows two sides or cross-sections of the glauconite soil of the cliffs at Cap de la Hève. It gives an idea of the positions of the strata and the successive layers of the Upper Jurassic, the green sand, the lines of the sources, the brown and gray-white glauconite-holding limestone, and the Upper Diluvian layer on top of these high cliffs."*

Charles-Alexandre Lesueur,  
*Views and Cross-Sections of the Cap de la Hève, 1843*

## EYEWITNESS TO UTOPIA

### SCIENTIFIC CONQUEST AND COMMUNAL SETTLEMENT IN C.-A. LESUEUR'S SKETCHES OF THE FRONTIER

*Utopia is no myth. It was there, at the frontier, the missing link between George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Apollo 17. Three progressive minds made it happen. Two had a vision of the future. One told their story in his sketchbooks: the true story of the scientific conquest of America.*

After courageously defending the city of Paris in 1814 and 1815, first to protect Napoleon, next to get rid of him, Charles-Alexandre Lesueur was in need of a better world. A philanthropic businessman provided the opportunity. Enthused by his scientific knowledge, William Maclure brought the French explorer to the United States. There he met the Founding Fathers and all the great minds of his time. Every knowledgeable American agreed to this: no one knew more than Lesueur. He was a living encyclopedia, the most talented student of Georges Cuvier. His contributions to American science were revolutionary. Then, suddenly, history forgot about him when together with a group of intellectuals he created an experimental scientific utopia. Abandoned by most of his friends on the American frontier, he initiated its geological exploration and systematic discovery.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND HIS RESEARCH

Born in the Netherlands in 1969, Bauke Ritsert Rinsma moved to France in 1990 and obtained two bachelor's degrees, in Law and Business Administration, as well as two master's degrees, in History and Anglo-American Literature, from the Universities of Le Havre and Rouen, before starting his career as a dedicated teacher and researcher, working part-time in the universities of Caen and Le Havre, and several other institutions. His innovative research on Charles-Alexandre Lesueur began with the preparations

for a Ph.D. Fluent in French, English, Dutch and German, he investigated archives and libraries across Europe and the U.S.A. to uncover C.-A. Lesueur's impact on American science. The savant turned out to be a modern Leonardo da Vinci, the irreplaceable collaborator of William Maclure, and the devoted disseminator of Georges Cuvier's knowledge.

#### ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Leslie Jean Roberts is a specialist in first translations of literary and cultural books in French. She translated *Exile in Richmond: The Confederate Diaries of Henri Garidel* (University Press of Virginia, 2001), Etienne Cabet's *Travels in Icaria* (Syracuse University Press, 2003), portions of the 1690 *Gravier Dictionary* for the Miami Tribes of Oklahoma and Indiana, and has published articles in various scholarly journals. She has a Ph.D. and M.A. in French Language and Civilization from Columbia University (New York), a B.A. from Tufts University (Massachusetts), and a diploma in French Civilization from the Sorbonne University (Paris). She taught at John Jay College of Criminal Justice (New York), Emerson College (Boston), and the University of Southern Indiana (Evansville). As a professor *emeritus*, she volunteered her time to translate Ritsert Rinsma's research because it brings to light a pioneer of science in Jefferson's America who later became a central figure in the New Harmony experiment.

*“ Ritsert Rinsma’s Eyewitness to Utopia presents Lesueur’s artistic gift to the New World in its most complete rendition and elevates this artist, scientist and communitarian to his own proper status among the most notable figures in the early Republic.”*

*Dr. Donald E. Pitzer, Director Emeritus, Center for Communal Studies, University of Southern Indiana*



Author and historian  
Ritsert Rinsma

*“ In this groundbreaking book, Ritsert Rinsma, with his comprehensive knowledge and acute perceptions, has succeeded masterfully in capturing the significance of Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, illuminating the context of his meaningful American sketchbooks.”*

*Dr. Ralph Grayson Schwarz, Founding President of Historic New Harmony, Inc.*

*“ I am delighted that the present memoir reveals the immensity of this historical figure from Le Havre.”*

*The Hon. Edouard Philippe, MP, Prime Minister of France*

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