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Conrad Wise Chapman and the Mexican Landscape

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University

by

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Abstract

CONRAD WISE CHAPMAN AND THE MEXICAN LANDSCAPE

Marisa Eileen Day, Masters of Arts

A thesis project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2011

Major Director: Dr. Michael Schreffler,
Chair, Department of Art History

This thesis focuses on several paintings of the Mexican landscape produced by Conrad Wise Chapman (1842 – 1910) and held by the Valentine Richmond History Center in Richmond, Virginia. Chapman lived in Mexico from 1865 to 1867 and from 1883 to 1908 (with a few short absences), and during this period, produced a large number of landscapes, which are the subject of this thesis and will be considered as an amalgamation of both nineteenth-century Mexican landscape painting and traveler-art.

It is the purpose of this study to demonstrate that Chapman's artistic style embodies both classical components of landscape painting and characteristics commonly associated with traveler-art. This investigation of Chapman's Mexican oeuvre provides significant insight into a period of the artist's career that has long been neglected, and it examines several works of art not yet considered by scholars.

Introduction

This thesis presents the outcome of research centered around several paintings of the Mexican landscape produced by Conrad Wise Chapman (1842 - 1910) and held by the Valentine Richmond History Center. Chapman lived in Mexico from 1865 to 1867 and from 1883 until 1908 (with a few short absences). During this time he produced a large and uncounted number of landscape sketches and paintings, a subset of which serve as the focus of this thesis. This study demonstrates that Chapman's artistic style, as displayed in these Mexican works, is atypical of both traveler-art and nineteenth-century landscape painting and should be considered instead as a union of these two genres.

This research contributes to the scholarship on Conrad Wise Chapman because it explores an aspect of the artist's career that has been neglected in the past. Most scholars and museum exhibitions have focused on Chapman's early Mexican works (painted between 1865 and 1867). To date, the scholarship focusing in detail on Chapman's works after the United State's Civil War is limited to two chapters in the book, *Conrad Wise Chapman: Artist & Soldier of the Confederacy* by Ben Bassham and an exhibition catalogue, *Conrad Wise Chapman: The Valley of Mexico*, produced by the Timkin Museum of Art in San Diego, California. The aforementioned literature pays attention only to Chapman's early Mexican artworks and the practical aspects of the later half of his life in Mexico (1883–1908). This investigation of Chapman's early and later compositions (particularly those attributed to the end of his residence in Mexico City) demonstrates how the artist's interpretation of the surrounding landscape

combined characteristics of both landscape painters and traveler-artists. Until now, this area of Chapman's artistic career has not been fully examined.

This thesis will suggest that though Chapman's artworks are similar to nineteenth-century landscape painting and traveler-art, aspects of the artist's oeuvre depart from these genres. Nineteenth-century landscape painting is defined in this thesis through the characteristics established by Barbara Novak in the third edition of her book *Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting, 1825–1875*. Novak writes about the nineteenth-century artists' decision to alter landscapes based on their own beliefs or interpretations of nature. Not only does Novak address the history and significance of the American landscape, but her concepts regarding iconography associated with landscape painting (such as clouds, rocks and foreground botany) contributes to this analysis of Chapman's works.

Traveler-art is used in this thesis to refer to artworks created by artists, explorers, businessmen, military personnel and travelers from the United States or Europe who traveled throughout Latin America using art to document and communicate their experiences to people residing outside of Latin America. This definition of traveler-artist's artistic intent is derived from Pablo Diener's *European Traveler-Artists in Nineteenth-Century Mexico*, an exhibition catalogue which discusses the reciprocal relationship between traveler-artists and Mexico in the nineteenth-century. Other sources, including Stanton L. Catlin's chapter in *Art in Latin America*, "Traveller-Reporter Artists and the Empirical Tradition in Post-Independence Latin American Art, and Katherine Manthorne's *Tropical Renaissance: North American Artists Exploring Latin America, 1839-1879* contributed to the definition used for this thesis.

The paintings, sketches and journal discussed in this thesis are either located or were formerly located in the Valentine Richmond History Center. The Valentine acquired these works

through an exchange with the Library of Virginia in 1940. The Library received these works in 1910 from Chapman's widow Laura Seager Chapman, and published a catalogue titled *Collection of Paintings, Drawings, Engravings, etc., by John Gadsby Chapman and Conrad Wise Chapman in the Virginia State Library* in 1920. In 1940, space constraints in the construction of a new library led the organization to execute a trade in which they exchanged all their paintings by Chapman for a number of the Valentine's Civil War era newspapers.

The Valentine maintained a collection of 841 Chapman paintings until 2003, when the museum revised its mission statement to focus only on Richmond history. As a result of this reconsideration the Valentine deaccessioned 811 works by Chapman, including a majority of the artist's Mexican landscapes. Many of the works were sold through Northeast Auction House. Due to the privacy of the auction records it is difficult to determine the current location of these artworks. The paintings that are the focus of this thesis, and the sketches that are the subject of Chapter 3, still remain in the museum's possession. This provided the opportunity to view Chapman's landscapes closely and in detail.

The first chapter of this thesis is titled "Going West: From Rome to Mexico." This section discusses Chapman's early life in Rome and the events of the Civil War, which ultimately led him to Mexico. Chapman's early portfolio is explored in the context of the nineteenth-century artistic movements in America and Europe, in order to understand the reasons for the trajectory of his work between Rome and Mexico. In addition, this chapter looks closely at how Chapman's social and cultural environment may have played a role in his artistic development and set the foundation for the paintings he produced in Mexico.

The second chapter, titled "Observation and Classical Techniques: Chapman's first visit to Mexico and the painting of the Bishop's Palace," details the arrival of the artist in Mexico in

1866 and investigates his documentation and exploration of the Mexican landscape. Utilizing the sketch *View of Monterrey from Bishop's Palace*, and two later paintings derived from the work, this chapter explores Chapman's desire and effort to capture the landscape in the moment it was first encountered.

The third and final chapter, "Chapman's Sketchbook and Puebla Inspirations," focuses primarily on the material in a sketchbook used by Chapman in 1896, thirty years after he first arrived in Mexico. By focusing on a sketch of the city of Puebla, titled as *Puebla: August 21st – 1896*, it becomes apparent that this drawing inspired the later painting, *Desde una azotea en Puebla* ("From a Rooftop in Puebla") from 1901. These works suggest that that during this period, Chapman continued to document the world around him in a way that mirrors both landscape painting and traveler-art. This period of Chapman's oeuvre and the two works examined in this chapter have never been discussed in academic literature and provide significant support for the consideration that though similar, Chapman's artworks are uncharacteristic of the scholarly definitions of both traveler-art and nineteenth-century landscape painting genres.

Chapter 1

Going West: From Rome to Mexico

In *Walking*, a series of essays and lectures penned by Henry David Thoreau in the 1850s, the writer proclaimed,

“eastward I go only by force: but westward I go free....We go eastward to realize history, and study the works of art and literature, retracing the steps of the race; we go westward as into the future, with a spirit of enterprise and adventure.”¹

Thoreau’s ideas about exploration reveal the desire, prevalent in sectors of nineteenth century American society, to travel to lands considered uncultivated by a prevailing Anglo/European attitude. These ideas, which were pervasive in American culture, may have inspired an impressionable Conrad Wise Chapman to pursue his own adventure. The U.S. Civil War provided Chapman with this opportunity. In this chapter, I will investigate the reasons why Chapman, a United States citizen, left Rome to join the Confederate army. This action became the catalyst for Chapman’s move to Mexico where he painted the works that are the focus of this project. In addition, this section will look at the work of the American landscape painter

¹ Henry David Thoreau, *Walking: an abridgement of essays by Henry David Thoreau* (Berkeley: Nature Company, 1993), 43.

Worthington Whittredge, to demonstrate how Conrad Wise Chapman's artworks relate and compare to this genre.

As previously mentioned, the majority of what we know about Conrad Wise Chapman's life in Rome comes from Ben Bassham's *Conrad Wise Chapman, Artist of the Confederacy*.² In his book, Bassham asserts that Chapman left Rome to fight for the South because of his rebellious nature and his Virginia heritage. While Bassham's observations are solid, I argue in the first part of this chapter that Chapman's desire to return to the United States was connected contemporaneously to a larger phenomenon, in which nineteenth-century artists were increasingly drawn to artistically depicting America's natural landscapes. This perspective contextualizes the artistic climate in which Chapman participated.

The second half of this chapter summarizes Chapman's experience as a Confederate soldier and examines the works he produced during this period. Evaluating the documentary attributes of his art further elucidates the motivations for his move across the Atlantic and his intention in the execution of his artworks. This chapter concludes with an explanation of the events that led Chapman to accidentally arrive in Mexico, and thus sets the stage for an analysis of the artist's Mexican landscapes.

Chapman in Rome

Chapman's father, John Gadsby Chapman is best known for the oil painting, *The Baptism of Pocahontas* (Figure 1), commissioned by the U.S. federal government in 1839. Despite receiving this commission, John Gadsby's primary income was derived from illustrating publications such

² Ben Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman: Artist & Soldier of the Confederacy* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1998).

as *Harper's Family Bible*.³ According to Bassham, John Gadsby felt that as an illustrator he would be destined to a lifetime of servitude to publishers and could only escape this fate through excellence and success in fine art. Trained as an academic painter in Italy and France, John Gadsby Chapman (who was born in Alexandria, Virginia, but resided in Washington, D.C., and later New York) believed he might find more success abroad. Rome, to John Gadsby, represented an opportunity to be inspired and to work as an artist rather than an illustrator. Thus, in 1849 John Gadsby Chapman moved his wife and three children (Jack, Conrad and Mary) to Rome in an attempt to perfect his craft and find success.

In Rome, the family socialized with a group of American artists who had also come to the city seeking inspiration.⁴ At this time, Rome was considered the art capital of Europe, and attracted many artists and tourists who wished to study the city's artistic treasures.⁵ Conrad Wise Chapman never studied at an academy, but family letters indicate that by 1853 he and his older brother John Linton Chapman (also known as Jack) were working and grinding colors in their father's studio.⁶ Despite his lack of classical training, Chapman developed the ability to "draw crisply" with a paintbrush, resulting in a style that was "refreshingly matter-of-fact."⁷

In other words, Chapman's paintings, like his father's, were composed of very detailed and precise brush strokes. Chapman, however, focused on mundane scenes of daily life while John Gadsby Chapman and Chapman's elder brother, John Linton, (also a painter) focused on romantic themes and emotional images within their art. John Gadsby's interest in portraying

³ Ben Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 19-22.

⁴ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 36-38.

⁵ For more information about American artists in Rome, one may want to read Barbara Novak's "Arcady Revisited: Americans in Italy," *Nature and Culture: American Landscape Painting, 1825-1875*, 3rd edition, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 173-193.

⁶ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 40-41.

⁷ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 41-43.

romantic or idealized subject matter is apparent in *The Baptism of Pocahontas at Jamestown, Virginia, 1613*. In this painting, Pocahontas is clad in a white European-style gown, kneeling at the center of the dramatic and significant occasion that is about to take place. The work employs the conventions of a historical painting, such as the exaggerated and inaccurate features, and is an idealized portrayal of this event.

While Bassham argues that Conrad Wise Chapman was only able to paint from close observation, it appears instead that he preferred to study and depict daily life through sketches, which later he would turn into paintings.⁸ One example of Chapman's early interest in capturing the mundane is *At the Well* (Figure 2), a landscape scene produced in 1859 when he was a teenager. The most noticeable difference between Chapman's work and John Gadsby's is the subject matter. Rather than focus on an epic scene or landscape, Chapman has depicted a mundane appliance, tucked into the side of a staircase. This device (the well) is imperative in function to the operation of the house, but not typically the aesthetic focus in a work of art. In this painting Chapman has paid close attention to all the details— including the discarded bucket, the overgrown weeds and even potted plants situated on the porch balcony. He has also included evidence of a human presence, including the ladder leaning against the shed and the remnants of the day's labor on a picnic table. Though the focus is different, Chapman's attention to small details and his ability to almost draw with the paintbrush is reflective of his father's work.

Works such as *At the Well* were significant to Chapman's oeuvre while in Rome, however according to Bassham, the young Chapman instead painted Roman landscapes and

⁸ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 46.

portraits of gypsies which he sold to tourists.⁹ Because John Gadsby's art had not brought him the success he had hoped for, the money both Chapman brothers earned selling their works of art provided the family with some financial relief.¹⁰

In 1861, at the start of the Civil War, Chapman and his brother announced their desire to join and fight for the Confederacy. Ignoring his parent's disapproval, Chapman took on secret commissions to pay for his passage to America, excluding even his brother from his plan. He then concocted a fabrication, informing his family that he intended to go to Paris for several months to visit museum exhibitions.¹¹ He broke the news of his true intentions in a letter he mailed en route to London, where he bought a ticket to America.¹² In response, his father wrote to his second son opposing these plans, stating; "The fatal quarrel that rages in America is none of ours in truth, either by instigation or aggravation— neither side has any just claims upon even our sympathy."¹³

Bassham suspects that Chapman's motivations for joining the Confederate cause were because of his loyalty to Virginia and because he wished to rebel from his family. According to Bassham, John Gadsby constantly reminded his children of their family lineage and as a result, Chapman felt that Virginia, and thus the Confederacy, was "the country I have always been taught to love."¹⁴ In addition, Bassham writes that Chapman suffered "Second Son Syndrome."¹⁵ The opportunity to leave allowed him to both authenticate himself and escape from his father,

⁹ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 45-47.

¹⁰ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 49.

¹¹ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 52.

¹² Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 53.

¹³ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 53.

¹⁴ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 56.

¹⁵ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 57.

who appears to have been very influential in his life.¹⁶ Certainly, these are two very legitimate reasons for Chapman's departure. However, his motivation to leave Italy was also inspired by a surge of interest in the American landscape (and particularly in lands in the west).

During the nineteenth century the American cultural elite experienced what Thomas Patin refers to as a "national cultural identity crisis."¹⁷ This insecurity resulted from the fact that the European nations had an established cultural heritage, and America did not. However, the plentiful natural wonders and landscapes provided cultural redemption for artists and writers alike.¹⁸ Though Patin's essay suggests that the images of the natural world led to the creation of national parks as museological institutions, this observation regarding America's desire to appropriate the land as examples of cultural heritage reflects the phenomenon in which artists painted and illustrated the United States' landscapes.

The Magisterial Gaze, written by Albert Boime, discusses this increased exploration and artistic depiction of the natural world. According to Boime, American visual and literary artists mourned the cultivation of the natural world but also participated in its commoditization, as their works often celebrated the expansion of the American empire.¹⁹ The Mexican-American War, the California Gold Rush, and the push for a transcontinental railroad stimulated the desire to expand communication and civilization to the western territories.²⁰ These social and political events led to an articulation of the American landscape as synonymous with American history.²¹

¹⁶ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 57.

¹⁷ Thomas Patin, "Exhibitions and Empire: National Parks and the Performance of Manifest Destiny," *Journal of American Culture* Vol. 22 (1999), 41.

¹⁸ Patin, "Exhibitions and Empire," 43.

¹⁹ Albert Boime, *The Magisterial Gaze: Manifest Destiny and American Landscape Painting c. 1830 – 1865* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 3.

²⁰ Boime, *The Magisterial Gaze*, 3-11.

²¹ Boime, *The Magisterial Gaze*, 11-13.

Boime cites the work of numerous artistic and literary figures that rendered the wilderness as both a potential paradise and an opportunity for exploitation. Boime's literary references include Thomas Cole and his "Essay on American Scenery," and the poet William Cullen Bryant who wrote the poem, "A Walk at Sunset." In Bryant's poem, Boime notes that tribute is paid to the original inhabitants of the American landscape:²²

The place of the thronged city still as night—
States fallen—new empires build upon the
 old—
But never shalt thou see these realms again
Darkened by boundless groves, and roamed by
 savage men.²³

America's "inherent right" to utilize the land was a theme available to all classes of people and a common subject of popular dime store novels.²⁴ In these stories, Americans were presented as heroes, attempting to "westernize" Native Americans, who fought to prevent the expansion of the American empire.²⁵ In addition, depictions of the landscape in this way served as propaganda which actively strengthened allegiance to the American cause and encouraged the course of future expansion.²⁶ Though Chapman was not totally imbedded in these concepts, he

²² Boime, *The Magisterial Gaze*, 12-14.

²³ William Cullen Bryant, "A Walk at Sunset," (1885) in Boime, *The Magisterial Gaze*, 12 –14.

²⁴ Boime, *The Magisterial Gaze*, 26-27.

²⁵ Boime, *The Magisterial Gaze*, 26-27.

²⁶ Patricia Hills, "Picturing Progress in the Era of Western Expansion" in *West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820 – 1920* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian, 1991), 28 – 29.

must have been aware of these ideas, as they were present in popular culture and among the American artists living in Rome.

Despite the encouragement to explore their own country, many other American artists traveled to Rome to study the works of the Great Masters, as many of these artists wished to experience the place from whence the great movements (later utilized in American art) originated. Barbara Novak addresses this eastward phenomenon in two chapters of her book *Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting, 1825 – 1875*. According to Novak, Italy was “a reality made dream or dream made real” for American artists.²⁷

The attraction to Rome and the great artists that the city produced led to the American adoption of the “Claudian mode” of painting landscapes, based upon those produced by the Italian artist Claude Lorraine.²⁸ This convention of painting can be identified by the framing of the landscape’s lateral edges using trees and fauna, a “scoop” of water in the middle ground and distant mountains in the background (Figure 3).²⁹ In the United States, it appears that this style was appropriated into Boime’s magisterial gaze— which depicted the landscape in a similar manner, but from an elevated position which thus “metonymically embraced the past, present and future” of the American domain.³⁰

George Loring Brown, John Kensett and Worthington Whittredge were three of the artists who Bassham believes were acquainted with the Chapman family.³¹ There is a strong possibility that through interactions with these American artists Chapman developed his awareness of the American wilderness and developed an interest in returning to his homeland. In

²⁷ Barbara Novak, *Nature and Culture: American Landscape Painting 1825-1875, Vol. 3*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 170-175.

²⁸ Novak, *Nature and Culture*, 195-197.

²⁹ Novak, *Nature and Culture*, 196.

³⁰ For more on the magisterial gaze please review Boime, *The Magisterial Gaze*, 1-5.

³¹ Bassham, 38, 49.

particular, the American born artist Worthington Whittredge, who was born in a log cabin near Springfield, Ohio, had the sort of biography a young Chapman may have admired. Whittredge explored the American landscape, painting throughout Ohio and West Virginia before traveling throughout Europe (Figure 4).³² He lived in Rome from 1857 to 1859 making it possible that he and Chapman crossed paths and engaged in conversations about Whittredge's interest in the western landscapes. Embodying nature in art was of great importance to Whittredge, as he would later travel west to the Rockies, and landscape would become his primary focus. It seems that if either Whittredge or his contemporaries were to have verbalized this beauty of their homeland, it would have piqued the young Chapman's interest. Chapman had not lived in the States since he was six years old, so he probably had little memory of his birthplace. In viewing Whittredge's and other landscape painters' peaceful observations of the natural world, Chapman might have craved an experience which would allow him to produce paintings of similar subjects.

While it is reasonable that Chapman's patriotism towards Virginia and his desire to escape his family were significant in the decision to join the Confederate cause, these catalysts were overlaid by the national sentiment which encouraged the exploration of the American landscape. Thus, it is possible that the decision to join the Confederacy facilitated Chapman's desire to explore and experience his homeland.

The Civil War

Chapman sailed from Paris to Liverpool in August of 1861. At the end of the month he left for New York on a ship named the *City of Manchester*. Chapman arrived in New York City on September 16, 1861, and traveled to Indianapolis before crossing into Henderson, Kentucky.

³² Anthony Jason, *Worthington Whittredge*, (Washington: Library of Congress, 1989), 12 – 35.

While it was easy to join the war effort on either side, it was difficult to cross over the lines into states which had ceded from the Union. Chapman had to reach the Confederate recruiting center in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, after traveling by way of steamboat, stagecoach and foot.³³ Once in Kentucky, Chapman served in Company D of the Third Kentucky Infantry Volunteers until he was transferred to a Virginia Brigade in 1862.

During his first years in the Confederacy, Chapman sketched and painted pictures of camp life and often mailed them back to his father who etched reproductions of the works. Bassham argues that Chapman's father encouraged this collaboration, believing that Chapman might become a well-known artist through his documentation of the Southern cause.³⁴ At the same time, it is entirely possible that John Gadsby sold these reproductions to individuals in Rome who wished to have realistic mementos of the Civil War. Selling copies of his son's "eye witness" illustrations certainly must have attracted a market, particularly among other expatriates. Bassham cites *Camp Near Corinth, Mississippi*, as an example of this father/son collaboration. The original work painted in 1862 was oil on board, but repainted by Chapman in 1864 and again in 1871 (Figures 5, 6 and 7). John Gadsby later etched this same scene, *Confederate Camp, 3rd Kentucky Infantry at Corinth, Mississippi* several years after the war (Figure 8). Despite the fact that the war had ended six years earlier, there must have still been a desire for illustrations of this critical period in American history.

While these sketches make camp life appear tranquil and calm, some of Chapman's illustrations depict the less idealized side of war. Take for example, *Yazoo City, Miss./ May 20th/62* (Figure 9), a pencil sketch depicting the flooded town from the door of the hospital where Chapman resided, or *Drewry's Bluff* (Figure 10) which portrays Union fortifications as seen from

³³ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 59-60.

³⁴ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 96-97.

the Confederate side of the James River in New Kent County, Virginia. The work is dated August 21st, 1863, implying that Chapman captured the scene quickly. While Chapman was interested in capturing the gritty side of war and reproduced the work as an oil sketch, there is no record indicating that John Gadsby reproduced etchings of the scene. Perhaps Chapman sent the heroic or idyllic images to his father to assuage his family's financial strain and worries over his safety. It is doubtful that there was a market for depressing illustrations, and it is more likely that buyers were interested in drawings that provided them with a safe visual experience.

Chapman's works that were not reproduced by his father demonstrate qualities similar to travel-art (sometimes called expeditionary art) as it is defined by Roger Balm in his article "Expeditionary Art: An Appraisal." Like travel-art, works such as *Drewry's Bluff* "can yield point-in-time pictorial information about the physical environment."³⁵ In other words, the order and style of Chapman's work contextualizes data in a pictorial form.³⁶ *Drewry's Bluff* does not portray a beautiful or heroic scene; in fact, there is clear evidence of war, including what Bassham believes to be a sunken Union vessel.³⁷ Thus, we can surmise that though the young Chapman may have found a certain aesthetic in the natural world, he may have produced only idyllic scenes for his father to reproduce and sell in Rome.

In September of 1863, Chapman was ordered south to defend Charleston from Union forces. It was in Charleston that Chapman began to produce his best known and most often

³⁵ Roger Balm, "Expeditionary Art: An Appraisal" in *Geographic Review* Vol. 90, Issue Four (October, 2000), 591.

³⁶ Balm, "Expeditionary Art," 589.

³⁷ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 90. Bassham bases his assertion on an oil on panel painting. The sketch that remains in the Valentine Richmond History Center collection was instead discussed for the purpose of this research.

discussed works, a series of thirty-one paintings of Charleston's defenses.³⁸ In South Carolina, General Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard recognized Chapman's artistic talent when the young soldier was employed to work on copying maps. General Beauregard wished to compile an official history of the Civil War in Charleston and believed that paintings, pictures and drawings served as mementos and pictorial records of the war.³⁹ In September of 1864, Chapman received an assignment from Beauregard to paint images of soldier activity at Fort Sumter. These thirty-one paintings produced by Chapman are often called the Charleston Series.

The majority of the works in this series, though conceived of in South Carolina, were painted in Rome. However, Chapman sketched all the scenes in oil, pencil and watercolor. He then transferred these detailed sketches onto canvas in March of 1865 when he was granted a furlough. Chapman returned to Rome on leave, and it was here he and his father painted the remaining sketches onto canvas or boards.⁴⁰ Although these works are meant to be documentary, it appears that Chapman employed many of the Claudian traditions.

Take *The Flag of Sumter October 20th, 1863* for example (Figure 11). Although Chapman does not frame the landscape, as was the habit of many artists influenced by academic painting, the organization of the canvas follows many traditions of Claudian works as outlined by Novak.⁴¹ The soldier standing on top of the trench beneath the tattered Confederate flag is reminiscent of the way that Claude used figures as exponents of mythology or legend. The placement of flag and soldier in the foreground reinforces the idea that the South's cause was legend or epic. In the mid-ground we see a body of water, while along the horizon in place of

³⁸ This group of paintings was purchased by the Museum of the Confederacy in 1898. Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 122 – 132.

³⁹ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 129-130.

⁴⁰ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 131.

⁴¹ Novak, *Nature and Culture*, 185, 196-197.

distant mountains, sits a chain of battleships.⁴² Though the work is littered with the remnants and the horrors of war – the barracks, the tattered flag, ruins and shells – it is a calm moment. Chapman has depicted the realistic aspects of war but has seized a moment that is quiet and rather picturesque. In this work, perhaps as a result of the collaboration with his father, Chapman unified the idyll and the reality of war.

At the end of his furlough and upon the completion of the *Charleston Series*, Chapman attempted to return to the South. However, he had difficulty securing a passage on a Confederate steamship. When he finally did embark for the United States the war had nearly ended. It is unclear if Chapman was aware on his journey back that the Union had taken control of the majority of all Confederate ports, making it nearly impossible to enter into any of the Confederate states. After several detours, Chapman finally arrived in Bagdad, a Mexican town near the port of Matamoros and twenty-five miles southeast of Brownsville, Texas.⁴³

Chapman did not stay in Bagdad long, writing that “The whole place seems to have been built up in a night” and “for even the wealth of California I would not live in this lonely point of land.”⁴⁴ Chapman left Bagdad for Houston, and heard of the Confederacy’s surrender as soon as he arrived in Texas.⁴⁵ Lacking the funds to pay for a return passage to Europe and not willing to accept defeat or participate in the reintegration of the Confederacy into the United States, Chapman joined a large group of ex-soldiers traveling to Mexico.⁴⁶ According to the historian A.L. Rowse, many Confederate soldiers, who witnessed the burning of cities and farmlands by

⁴² Novak, *Nature and Culture*, 196-197.

⁴³ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 185. For more information about this region during the Civil War one may review, Thompson, Jerry. *Civil War and revolution on the Rio Grande frontier: a narrative and photographic history* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2004).

⁴⁴ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 187.

⁴⁵ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 189.

⁴⁶ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 180.

the Union forces, did not wish to participate in the reconstruction of the southern United States. Those who shared this sentiment believed they would find a better future in Mexico.⁴⁷ And so Chapman headed south where he and other Confederate soldiers were welcomed into Mexico by France's newly established puppet government.

John Gadsby Chapman noted in a letter written a few years before the Civil War that he hoped his sons would be "American artists."⁴⁸ This desire on the part of his father to train and produce an American artist most likely also played a role in Chapman's decision to cross the Atlantic. Though Bassham argues that Chapman left Rome for other reasons, it also appears that the young artist believed that at the conclusion of the war, as he wrote in a letter to his brother, he would "have plenty of time to go around sketching."⁴⁹ Chapman's unanticipated arrival in Mexico would not necessarily conflict with his original intentions, for the Civil War may have simply been a means to an end, or in his case, a beginning. In other words, while it may have been vital to his ego that he prove himself to his family, Chapman's true aspiration might not have been to fight for Virginia or even to disobey his father. Rather he wanted to explore and illustrate his homeland and acquire subject matter so he could participate in developing American artistic ideals of beauty and history. While Chapman may have been uncertain about his future when he entered Mexico, his ever increasing curiosity and desire to explore the world must have been contributing factors to his production of the Mexican landscapes discussed in the next chapter.

⁴⁷ Andrew Whole, *The Lost Cause: The Confederate Exodus to Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), 5-10.

⁴⁸ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 50.

⁴⁹ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 50.

Chapter 2

Observation and Classical Techniques:

Chapman's first visit to Mexico and the painting of the Bishop's Palace

When Chapman arrived in Monterrey, Mexico, in 1865 he wrote to his father that “Mexico is the most thoroughly picturesque country I ever was in. The mountain scenery surpasses anything I have seen before.”⁵⁰ This description by Chapman not only demonstrates his love of the natural world, but also reflects the opinions of other traveler-artists in Mexico, who were inspired through encounters with the environment and chose to make the country's landscape the subject of their artworks.

Chapman's interest in exploring and documenting his first experience in Mexico will be the focus of this chapter through the examination of a sketch of Monterrey produced in 1865, titled *View of Monterrey from Bishop's Palace* (Figure 12a/b), and two painted versions of the same sketch produced in 1879 and 1901, respectively. The painted works depict the same scene with various differences and are titled *The French on Obispado Hill* (1879) and *View of Monterrey from Bishop's Palace* (1901) (Figure 13 and Figure 14). While the 1865 sketch captures the initial moment of perception, the later paintings demonstrate Chapman's attempt to

⁵⁰ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 195.

maintain the illusion that both were done *en plein air* when in reality they were not.⁵¹ *The French on Obispado Hill* and *View of Monterrey from Bishop's Palace* were created many years after Chapman had left northern Mexico, though the sketch and original concept for both scenes were developed in the first months of the artist's arrival. This suggests that Chapman did not use this landscape sketch to communicate immediately or display his surroundings to outsiders. In essence, the discussion of these works will show that Chapman's artistic style diverges in process from that of traveler-artists during this period who used their art as a vehicle to share their impressions with others through the publication (in books or magazines) or display of their artworks.

These two paintings demonstrate Chapman's interest in artistically revisiting landscapes throughout his lifetime and his continual utilization of the classical techniques ingrained in him during his artistic education and training. In addition, both works depict a structure rarely discussed but significant to the history of Monterrey, Mexico. The inclusion of the Bishop's Palace as the focus of these two works allows us to discuss the building's history as being a reason why it was depicted by Chapman.

The first part of this chapter will discuss the Mexico that Chapman encountered and investigate how his paintings and sketches relate to works by other traveler-artists in nineteenth-century. I will then discuss *The French on Obispado Hill* and *View of Monterrey from Bishop's Palace* as being representative of Chapman's search for the classically picturesque landscape. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a discussion of Chapman's motivation for capturing this particular scene and explain the cultural and historical importance of Bishop's Palace.

⁵¹ *En plein air* is a French expression used in this thesis to describe the act of painting with studio materials outdoors.

Chapman's arrival in Mexico

When Chapman arrived in Mexico the government was in a state of political flux. Having gained independence from Spain in 1821 the country had felt its share of conflict. The War of Reform (which was fought between liberal and conservative Mexicans regarding the role of the Catholic Church in politics) and President Benito Juárez's failure to pay interest on loans to foreign creditors led to an intervention by the French, a plan originally supported by Great Britain and Spain.⁵² John Hart's book, *Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico since the Civil War*, focuses specifically on the political, social and economic relationship between the United States and Mexico and suggests that the French were motivated to occupy the country by their desire to gain control over markets and raw materials.⁵³ In addition, France hoped that taking control of Mexico would enable them to keep watch over the United States' growing influence over the North American continent.⁵⁴ After an invasion by the French in 1864 Mexico became a monarchy, led by Emperor Maximilian and his consort Carlotta. This administration hoped to focus on developing Mexico's agrarian production.⁵⁵

Chapman originally crossed the border into Mexico with General John B. Magruder, a well-known Confederate and veteran of the Mexican-American War, who had fought in the decisive battle of Monterrey. Other Confederate soldiers arrived in Mexico under the leadership

⁵² For a discussion regarding French intervention in Mexico please refer to John M. Taylor, *Maximilian and Carlotta: A story of Imperialism*. London: G Putnam and Sons, 1973, or Michele Cunningham, *Mexico and the Foreign Policy of Napoleon III*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. These and other sources on this period of Mexican history provide more details about the French establishment of Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian Joseph of Austria as Maximilian I of Mexico, which was instigated by Napoleon III to ensure European access to French markets and prevent a United States monopoly in regards to trade with Latin America.

⁵³ John Mason Hart, *Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico since the Civil War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 9 – 15.

⁵⁴ Hart, *Empire and Revolution*, 9– 15.

⁵⁵ Hart, *Empire and Revolution*, 19.

of General John Shelby, a commander during the Civil War. Upon this group's arrival in Mexico City, Shelby met with the Maximilian administration and asked for asylum.⁵⁶ This request was not unexpected since during the Civil War the Confederacy had carried on trade with Mexico's northern states and had formed a diplomatic relationship with the Maximilian government.⁵⁷ The Rio Grande, the border between northern Mexico and the United States, served as one of the few outlets through which the Confederacy could continue its trade with outside markets. This led to a small commercial boom in an area of northern Mexico near Monterrey that was generally poor and plagued by disease and drought.⁵⁸ After the Civil War, when many of the soldiers Chapman arrived with had crossed into Mexico, trade with the Confederacy was ending.⁵⁹ As a result, many of the soldiers moved on to Mexico City to take jobs with the Maximilian administration or chose to travel to Cuba or Brazil.⁶⁰ Chapman, however, remained in Monterrey through the end of the fall of 1865.

Chapman documented his experience crossing into Mexico with other Confederate soldiers and their families in the work *Encampment in the Mountains* (Figure 15). In this oil sketch we see a number of tents belonging to Confederate expatriates pitched along a hillside. At the center of the panorama we are able to look into two open tents. In the larger of the tents, three men are seated, while in the smaller tent a man relaxes in a reclining position. The land outside the tented campsite is populated by smaller figures, perhaps children, who are either exploring or playing.

⁵⁶ Eugene Harter, *The Lost Colony of the Confederacy* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1985), 16-17.

⁵⁷ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 193.

⁵⁸ Ronnie C. Tyler, *Santiago Vidaurri and the Southern Confederacy* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association Press, 1973), 14.

⁵⁹ Tyler, *Santiago Vidaurri and the Southern Confederacy*, 15.

⁶⁰ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 195.

The presence of individuals in this work allows the viewer to glance into the lives of these former Confederates who crossed into Mexico with their families. The work is a personal documentary and provides some semblance of what Chapman's daily life was like at this time. The nature of this work allows Chapman to act from the point of view of both a participant and a spectator. The scene is on a frail and thin piece of paper that is torn at the edges. Clusters of tents and their inhabitants are interspersed throughout the center of the landscape. The desolate land surrounding the encampment is painted in brown, green and yellow tones, and the scattered travelers are the only indication of civilization. Though Bassham writes that he believes this work was executed quickly, Chapman's attention to the small details of the community and the individuals contradict this assertion and indicate that the artist carefully observed and participated in the human experience he painted.⁶¹

It is a reasonable hypothesis that this work was produced soon after Chapman crossed into Mexico, because upon his arrival the artist took up semi-permanent residence in the area. Bassham believes Chapman stayed in Monterrey because his knowledge of Italian allowed him to form friendships with locals including a priest named Padre Navarro.⁶² Chapman described Padre Navarro in the following manner:

A jolly specimen of a Mexican priest, and I understand lives well and has plenty of old wine in his sellar [sic]. He told me the other day I could read to my hearts [sic] content Don Quixote and other Spanish books.⁶³

⁶¹ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 201.

⁶² Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 196.

⁶³ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 196.

In return for the kindnesses detailed in the letter, Chapman worked on and repaired the priest's church. In his free time, Chapman had the opportunity to sketch various scenes which he must have saved with the intention of creating paintings at a later date. An example of this process is the 1865 sketch, *View of Monterrey from Bishop's Palace*, which led to the creation of *The French on Obispado Hill* and *View of Monterrey from Bishop's Palace* (1901). The delayed production of the latter works demonstrates Chapman's deviation from the process used by other traveler-artists during this period.

However, letters written by Chapman suggest a strong enthusiasm for exploration. In his writings, Chapman appears proud of his accomplishments and demonstrates the exploratory characteristics of many traveler-artists.⁶⁴ Upon leaving Monterrey in 1866 for a surveying job near an area noted by Bassham as "La Huesteca," Chapman wrote to his parents that he

climbed the pyramids and walked the streets of the old city of Popocallan [sic] and met the idols of the ancient Mexicans face to face as they grinned at us through the tangled vines and shrubbery as we passed through the ruins of what must have been an immense city.—Here we are, a little party of six Confederates in one of the wildest and most uncivilized portions of Mexico.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ For more information on the profile of traveler-artists one can read Pablo Diener, "Profile of the Traveler-Artist in the Nineteenth Century," in *European Traveler Artists in Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (México, D.F.: Fomento Cultural Banamex, 1996), 63-83. In addition, Katherine Manthorne, *Tropical Renaissance: North American artists exploring Latin America, 1839-1879* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999) looks at the way American traveler-artists viewed Latin America as an extension of the United States that needed to be developed, not just explored.

⁶⁵ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 203.

It is unclear exactly where Chapman was when this letter was written. Initially it appears that Bassham (or Chapman) is actually referring to “La Huasteca,” located near Monterrey, as “La Huesteca” is not a known location in Mexico. This change in spelling may only suggest an error in interpretation. However, in his text and endnotes Bassham writes that “La Huesteca” was near the vicinity of Carlota in the Cordova Valley along the Panuco River, which is not near Monterrey.⁶⁶ Gene Smith sheds some light on this confusion in his book, *Maximilian and Carlotta*. Smith’s investigation of Carlotta and Maximilian’s reign references the Carlota Colony, which was organized by Confederates with help from the Mexican government on a five-hundred-thousand-acre tract near Córdoba, Vera Cruz.⁶⁷ Therefore, it is probable that Chapman was surveying in this area and that La Huesteca may have been a camp or small town. However, since we cannot discern where La Huesteca or Popocallan was located, it is difficult to discern for certain that Chapman was in the region of Vera Cruz at the time that this letter was written.⁶⁸

If Chapman was surveying east of Mexico City in the vicinity of the Carlota Colony then his sketches represent a significant period in Mexican history. The monarchy encouraged Confederates to actually colonize various lands as a way of increasing agricultural production, and the Carlota Colony was the result of this initiative.⁶⁹ As a surveyor, Chapman and his group worked on clearing the land and turning it into farmland.⁷⁰ According to his many letters, it was

⁶⁶ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 203.

⁶⁷ Gene Smith, *Maximilian and Carlotta* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1973), 201.

⁶⁸ For more on the Confederate Carlota colony, one might read Carl Coke Rister, “Carlotta, a Confederate Colony in Mexico,” *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Feb., 1945), 33 – 50.

⁶⁹ Harter, *The Lost Colony of the Confederacy*, 17.

⁷⁰ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 205.

difficult work but he enjoyed it, writing to his parents that, “Hard Fare (sic)- hard work and a hard pallet somehow agree with me better than the luxuries of fashionable life.”⁷¹

A work that defines Chapman’s participation as a traveler-artist in Mexico and which serves as ephemera related to this period in Mexican history is *Camp No 2. Terrenos Baldios*, which translates to “fallow land” (Figure 17). This illustration portrays the camp Chapman lived in while surveying, located at the edge of a clearing.⁷² Again, Chapman has captured individuals going about their daily life, washing dishes and relaxing under the shade of their enclave. The lush dark jungle encroaches on the camp and contrasts greatly with the lighter hues of the camp clearing. The landscape’s organization does not reflect the classical components seen in other sketches and suggests that like the 1865 sketch, *View of Monterrey from Bishops Palace*, it serves as a contribution to Chapman’s collected inspiration, which he intended to use in later paintings.

In both *Encampment in the Mountains* and *Terrenos Baldios* Chapman attempted to capture the mood of the environment, rather than document the exoticism of the location. Chapman’s interest in portraying his surroundings mirrors the motivations of other traveler-artists, however in utilizing these images for his own portfolio and later inspiration demonstrates a departure from this genre, which is continually defined by a desire to communicate information with outsiders.

Scholar Germán Rubiano Caballero argues that traveler-artists, who traveled and sketched throughout Latin America in the nineteenth century, were the first to actually produce a visual record of the continent.⁷³ Motivated by the drawings and writings of the traveler Alexander Von

⁷¹ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 203.

⁷² Diener, *European Traveler Artists in Nineteenth-Century Mexico*, 73.

⁷³ German Rubiano Caballero, “Latin American Landscape, From Travelers to Modernity” in *Paradise Lost? Aspects of Landscape in Latin American Art* (Coral Gables: University of Miami, 2003), 21- 23.

Humbolt, many Europeans and Americans ventured to Central and South America to capture, experience and communicate to others what they saw to be “uncivilized” and “exotic” locations. Mexico in particular was a primary subject for many traveler-artists interested in capturing the landscape.

Caballero cites the *View of the Valley of Mexico*, by Daniel Thomas Egerton, as a primary example of the type of work produced by traveler-artists in Mexico during this period (Figure 16).⁷⁴ The work portrays a bucolic Mexican scene in which the action is flanked by native agave plants. Echoing the Claudian tradition, the scene’s action takes place in the foreground. Mexico City is painted along the horizon, bordering what appears to be the former Lake Texcoco, while a mountain range rises up in the background.⁷⁵ Like Egerton, many traveler-artists were interested in capturing the environment through a combination of close, almost scientific observation of nature and academic training.⁷⁶ Unlike Egerton’s *Valley of Mexico*, Chapman’s sketches do not depict plants or individuals in this way. Instead, Chapman’s works capture moments in his daily life. While Egerton’s purpose was to recreate a landscape for others to gaze upon or revere, Chapman acts as both viewer and participant and gives *Encampment in the Mountains* and *Terrenos Baldios* a more documentary and personal quality.

Traveler-artist George Henry White, who worked and painted in Mexico from 1862 to 1863 produced paintings that were at first glance arguably similar to those created by Chapman (Figure 18). White worked as a clerk for the British firm, Baring Brothers & Company.⁷⁷ He

⁷⁴ Caballero, *Paradise Lost? Aspects of Landscape in Latin American Art*, 21.

⁷⁵ Lake Texcoco was a natural lake located in the Valley of Mexico. However, after the Spanish colonization Lake Texcoco was drained to allow for the expansion and development of Mexico City.

⁷⁶ Esther Acevedo et al, *Mexico: A Landscape Revisited* (DC: Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, 1994), 19.

⁷⁷ Diener, *European Traveler Artists in Nineteenth-Century Mexico*, 73.

traveled to Mexico during the Maximilian reign to negotiate with the government for the return of interest payments to London bondholders.⁷⁸ White meticulously described the Mexican landscape through his letters and the eighty watercolor works he created while abroad. These watercolor paintings served as an important visual reference for the company, for though Baring Brothers & Company had done business in Mexico since the 1830s, these watercolors provided the first views of the country and today are still stored in the company's visual exhibition and archive.⁷⁹

White's *Tacubaya: Church Building in a Landscape*, produced sometime between 1862 and 1863 presents a documentary quality similar to Chapman's *Encampment*. Tacubaya, located approximately four miles southwest of the center of Mexico City, is viewed from a road entering into town. A church is located at the center of the painting and is flanked by lush vegetation and blue-hued mountains in the background. The organization of the landscape suggests that White had knowledge of classic landscape components. However, the sketch-like quality of the work gives movement to the landscape and implies that White, like Chapman, acted as an observer interested in expressing the essence of the location. Unlike Chapman, White captured these landscapes on sight, and did not intend to collect them for a later portfolio. Rather they were for the purpose of disseminating information. White's watercolors demonstrate a fundamental characteristic of traveler-art, which is the desire to document and transmit one's experiences through an artistic medium while capturing the initial impression of a location. Though Chapman's sketches do the same, they diverge from the definition outlined by Caballeros and

⁷⁸ Diener, *European Traveler Artists in Nineteenth-Century Mexico* 96-97.

⁷⁹ Diener, *European Traveler Artists in Nineteenth-Century Mexico*, 97. In addition, to view all of White's landscapes visit: http://www.baringarchive.org.uk/art_collection/browse/landscape.

Diener in that they were saved for the artist's portfolio, not for the purpose of circulating information.

A Picturesque Landscape

Chapman wrote to his father often during his travels through Monterrey and Mexico City. In one such letter he described his surroundings enthusiastically, stating, "it would take months to describe this country and the wonderful picturesqueness of everything here."⁸⁰ While Chapman's sketches demonstrate his likeness to traveler-art, his pursuit in capturing "the most thoroughly picturesque country" resembles the desire of many nineteenth-century landscape painters who viewed landscape from a more romantic perspective.

In the context of the nineteenth century, Chapman's use of the word "picturesque" applies to landscapes in which he could seek to recreate or reconcile the style and mood of Italianate artists such as Claude Lorraine.⁸¹ Brian Lukacher writes of this phenomenon in regards to English painting, stating that "The tourist, well versed in the playful formalism and classifying criteria of the picturesque could take vital possession...and thereby entertain an illusory dominion over nature."⁸² In the following section, we will see that Chapman's paintings do this precisely. Both *View of Monterrey from Bishop's Palace* (1901) and *The French on Obispado Hill* utilize Claude Lorraine's formula for landscape painting as outlined by Novak. The variations in included figures and the slight changes in vantage point manipulates the landscape

⁸⁰ Bassham, 198 * please note that the majority of Chapman's letters from his time in Mexico were deaccessioned. There are typed versions of only a few of these letters remaining in the Chapman collection files.

⁸¹ Brian Lukacher, "Nature and History in English Romantic Landscape Painting" in *Nineteenth Century Art, A Critical History*, third edition, (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007), 120.

⁸² Lukacher, "Nature and History in English Romantic Landscape Painting," 120.

to show that the paintings embody Chapman's initial documentary impression while still maintaining the picturesque standard.

Both *The French on Obispado Hill* (Figure 13) and *View of Monterrey from Bishop's Palace* (Figure 14) were produced many years after Chapman left Mexico. However, evidence suggests that both works were developed from the oil sketch produced in 1865 titled *View of Monterrey from Bishop's Palace*.⁸³ The visual evidence for this work was found attached to a 4 x 6 index card at the Valentine Richmond History Center. The top thumbnail sized photograph displays a negative of *View of Monterrey from Bishop's Palace*, while the bottom photo negative shows what appears to be an original sketch of the work. (Figure 12a/b). In the sketch we see the outline of the Chepe Vera Hill and the architectural details of Bishop's Palace and of Saddle Hill in the distance. At this time it appears that no immediate painting was made from the sketch. Diener does write that many traveler-artists did not paint *en plein air* or on location, as it was difficult for them to carry all necessary materials into the field.⁸⁴ This method allowed them to reproduce their initial perception of the space numerous times. However, Diener's overall argument, which asserts that traveler-artists are defined by their interest in communicating their visual experiences, implies that though paintings were not done on location, they were often recreated soon after. Chapman's situation is unusual, for he did not utilize this sketch until nearly nine years later. This suggests that the primary purpose of his travels in Mexico was to build his portfolio for later works rather than to document and report his visual experiences to those in Europe.

Chapman attempted to emulate his first impression in the rendering of *The French on Obispado Hill*, which was produced in 1879 when the artist was living in Europe. This painting

⁸³ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 198.

⁸⁴ Diener, *European Traveler Artists in Nineteenth-Century Mexico*, 145.

depicts the city of Monterrey, Saddle Hill and the Bishop's Palace as seen from Chepe Vera Hill in 1865, during the French occupation of Mexico. Similar to the works he produced of camp life during the Civil War (discussed in Chapter 1), Chapman has portrayed an episode of bivouacking, a term which applies to the soldiers using the area as a temporary encampment.⁸⁵ At the center of the painting French soldiers dressed in uniform relax in the grass, their bayonets stacked together. A Frenchman to the left of the group stands looking out towards the left, resting his hand on his own gun.

The Bishop's Palace is depicted from the back entrance. The courtyard is visible through the back doorway and is guarded by a soldier. The octagonal cupola and buttresses are painted in bright hues of pink and blue and stand out against the terrestrial tones of the landscape and the dark, almost charcoal blue grey of Saddle Hill (or Cerro de la Silla) which rises up in the distance. Chapman's use of color creates the illusion of an imposing mountain which contrasts dramatically against the lighter and brighter colors of Bishop's Palace.

Chapman has also paid close attention to clouds, making certain to reflect the darker shade of their shadows on the side of the mountain. Novak writes about the portrayal of clouds in *Nature and Culture*, and suggests that their presence in landscape paintings imposes "order on the momentarily seen and observed."⁸⁶ Chapman may have included the passing clouds to imply that the painting was produced *en plein air*, insinuating that he was only a passing observer in the landscape. In reality, Chapman was actually residing in Europe when he painted *The French on Obispado Hill*. Thus, the work was rendered from sketches and his memory of the location.

⁸⁵ Angélica Velazquez Guadarrama, *The Painting Collection of the Banco Nacional De México*, (Mexico, D.F.: Fomento Cultural Banamex, 2004), 133.

⁸⁶ Novak, *Nature and Culture*, 76.

View of Monterrey from Bishop's Palace (Figure 14) revisits the scene again twenty-two years later. Chapman was living in Mexico City in 1901, but there is no record that he traveled to Monterrey during this period. It seems unlikely that he would have made the journey, as Monterrey is located 600 miles away from Mexico City, and during the late nineteenth century this would have been quite an undertaking. Therefore, we can hypothesize that Chapman created this work from the 1865 sketch and subsequent painting.

In *View of Monterrey from Bishop's Palace* the landscape components are similar and the viewer again looks at the city of Monterrey from the Chepe Vera hill. The distance between the viewer and the palace is greater here, suggesting that Chapman is trying to capture the scene from a higher vantage point. His manipulation in perspective allows the viewer to experience the landscape as it stretches outward from either side of the city. The context of the painting changes from a scene of French occupation to one of local autonomy, as Chapman has replaced the French soldiers with men dressed in nineteenth century traditional clothing. The palace is again viewed from the back of the structure, but in less detail. Chapman has also toned down the palace's brightly colored cupola and dome, which has lessened the dramatic contrast between the structure and the mountain.

The subdued colors and the city depicted on the left side of the palace contrasts with the lack of civilization on the right and emphasizes the space that has not yet been developed. The earthen tones that Chapman uses in this painting contrast greatly with the darker and brighter hues used in *The French on Obispado Hill*. In the center foreground stands the Bishop's Palace and along the same line of sight, acting as almost a natural reflection, in part because of the nearly matching tones, stands Saddle Hill (Cerro de la Silla). The parallel placement of the church and the natural landmark may arguably be a profound attempt by Chapman to

demonstrate the dissimilarity between man and nature. This theme was particularly prevalent amid nineteenth-century American painters, including Worthington Whittredge. As discussed in Chapter 1, paintings by this artist may have had a profound effect on Chapman's desire to pursue landscapes outside of Europe. It is entirely possible that Chapman, whose oeuvre was shaped by his initial interest in American landscapes, consciously painted the palace and the mountain as contrasting features to demonstrate his understanding of this artistic trend. This aspect of the work further suggests that the Chapman's style was an amalgamation of both landscape and traveler-art genres.

Differences between *View of Monterrey from Bishops Palace* and *The French on Obispado Hill* also demonstrate that Chapman attempted to produce each painting as if it were his initial impression of the scene. For example, the use of earthen hues in *View of Monterrey from Bishop's Palace* shows a movement towards a more realistic depiction of the natural landscape. The replacement of the French troops with Mexican citizens suggests that Chapman wanted to imply that the painting was rendered during an actual visit to the location. However, the artist's difficulty creating individuals of proportionate size appropriate to the figure-ground relationship demonstrates his distance from the reality he was trying to convey.

Why Bishop's Palace? History and Significance

Prior to the production of these two works, Chapman often painted or sketched landscapes relevant to his own personal experience. In *Terrenos Baldios* and *Encampment in the Mountains*, Chapman was a participant in the scene, capturing environments in which he was actively involved. In *The French on Obispado Hill* and *View of Monterrey from Bishop's Palace*, Chapman serves as a witness to the landscape and thus venerates the scene. Utilizing formal

techniques Chapman has painted a structure which was significant historically and culturally to both Americans and Mexicans and quite possibly reminded him of Europe because of the building's classical portal and architecture.

The Bishop's Palace was renovated in recent years and today is called the Museo Regional de Nuevo León (but it is also often referred to as *el Palacio de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe* and later, *El Obispado*). The palace was built to celebrate the Bishop of Nuevo León, Fray Rafael Jose Verger. Born in 1722, Verger joined the Catholic church in 1738. From the brief biographies that have been written, we know that Verger arrived in Mexico from Spain in 1750 and was appointed as Bishop of the Kingdom of Nuevo León by the Catholic Monarch, Charles III in 1783.⁸⁷

The Bishop's Palace was built on Chepe Vera Hill at the suggestion of a medical practitioner named Fray Antonio de la Vera y Gálvez. Fray Antonio believed that Monterrey's location between the Sierra Madre and Saddle Hill prevented proper air flow which resulted in the unhealthiness of the city's inhabitants. He therefore advised that both Verger and the current mayor of the city build their houses on the northern and western hills of the city.⁸⁸

The construction of the Palace coincided with *El año del hambre* (the year of the hunger), a drought in Mexico which lasted from 1785 until 1787 and destroyed many crops. The construction of the structure lasted until 1788 and provided jobs and financial relief to those who had been affected by the drought.⁸⁹ Built from local materials found in a nearby quarry, the stone

⁸⁷ Xavier Mendirichaga Cueva, *El Obispado* (Monterrey: Museo Regional de Nuevo León, 1976), 26.

⁸⁸ Óscar Eduardo Martínez Garza, *Encuentro Con El Barrio Antiguo de Monterrey* (Monterrey: Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo Leon, 1999), 54-56.

⁸⁹ Cueva, *El Obispado*, 2.

used was the same color as the hillside and created the illusion that the Palace was rising out of the land.⁹⁰

The completed structure boasted a large chapel with an octagonal domed roof painted in bright hues of blue and red. The cupola of the chapel is a ribbed dome on top of octagonal drums and is flanked by two large windows. The building's original interior was allegedly filled with paintings of popes and bishops, while above the altar hung a portrait of the Virgin of Guadalupe.⁹¹ Behind the chapel the structure takes the shape of a square. It was this part of the structure which housed a large pantry, library, private quarters and wine cellar.⁹² It is likely that the building appeared to Chapman as a European hybrid of the different types of architecture he grew up with in Rome. Seeing Bishop's Palace silhouetted against the city of Monterrey may have reminded Chapman of the picturesque landscape paintings produced by Italian artists, and thus inspired him to take on the production of this scene. This attraction to European architecture and picturesque landscapes further supports the suggestion that Chapman's works represent a hybrid of both traveler-artist and landscape intent and execution.

On July 5, 1790, Bishop Verger died, and upon his death bequeathed the Palace to the city of Monterrey, an action which demonstrated the Bishop's commitment to the city.⁹³ Despite the Bishop's attempt to preserve the structure as a palace, in 1816 a man named Joaquin de Arredondo converted the Palace into a barracks. As a result of this transformation and its location on the Chepe Vera Hill, the Bishop's Palace was of strategic importance during the Mexican-American War.

⁹⁰ Cueva, *El Obispado*, 11.

⁹¹ Cuerva, *El Obispado*, 6 - 8.

⁹² Cuerva, *El Obispado*, 2-5.

⁹³ Garza, *Encuentro Con El Barrio Antiguo de Monterrey*, 55.

In 1846, when the American troops invaded Monterrey, the palace served as a significant fortification that American soldiers ultimately captured. The site of the battle, or *Independence Hill* as it was called by American forces, was depicted in a lithograph created in 1847 (Figure 19). The scene is depicted from nearly the same location as Chapman's paintings, looking past the structure out towards Saddle Hill and the city. The artist has portrayed soldiers stationed and socializing outside of the structure, which also mirrors Chapman's paintings of the same subject. This already established vantage point also supports Bassham's belief that General Magruder, who fought in this decisive battle, may have encouraged Chapman to visit the historical location.⁹⁴ Having had experience painting Confederate locations of importance during the Civil War, Chapman may have been attracted to the historical significance and the architecture of Bishop's Palace and thus felt obligated to capture this scene, as it served as the site of an "American cause."

Based on the history of the location, the French had likely converted the Palace into barracks when Chapman arrived in Mexico. A Mexican government website reports that in the mid-nineteenth century Governor Santiago Vidaurri tried to turn the building into an art school.⁹⁵ Though this suggestion is reinforced by scholar Ronnie Tyler's assertion that Vidaurri was a politician committed to the arts, we cannot be entirely sure what changes had occurred.⁹⁶ Despite this ambiguity, at the time of Chapman's arrival, the Bishop's Palace was already a rich historical landmark. The structure symbolizes the benevolence of a Catholic bishop, a point of contention between Mexican and American soldiers and a representation of Italian style

⁹⁴ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 198-199.

⁹⁵ Website:

<http://www.indaabin.gob.mx/dgpif/historicos/palacio%20de%20nuestra%20se%F1ora%20de%20Oguadalupe.htm> (visited 11/10/2010).

⁹⁶ Ronnie C. Tyler, *Santiago Vidaurri* (Round Rock: Texas State University, 1973), 29.

architecture. Each of these factors, along with the artist's desire to explore and document, might have drawn Chapman to this scene and led to the production of these later landscapes.

The French on Obispado's Hill and *View of Monterrey from Bishop's Palace* are not the only landscapes based upon Chapman's early sketches. Chapman produced other landscapes but none include a structure so significant to Mexico's history. By looking at both versions of the same scene and earlier works such as *Encampment in the Mountains* and *Terrenos Baldios*, we are able to see that Chapman as an artist vacillated between producing art in which he included himself, and seeking out landscapes which adhered to picturesque tradition. The paintings of Monterrey exhibit the duality of Chapman's artistic motivations; he documented various aspects of his travels, but still looked to classical techniques for his organization. Finally, the context in which these works were created reveals Chapman's participation and presence in the nineteenth-century history of both the United States and Mexico.

Chapter 3

Chapman's Sketchbook and Puebla Inspirations

While traveling through France and studying with Parisian artists in 1889, José María Velasco, the Mexican landscape artist, wrote: “Few nations have such beautiful and original style as Mexico....We often examine European ornamentation and pay no attention to what we have in Mexico even despite its being so beautiful and original.”⁹⁷ Chapman was not one of these artists to whom Velasco refers, because after leaving the country, Chapman continued to find purpose and inspiration in Mexico's vast landscape. Chapman eventually returned and created unconventional works that continued to diverge from other defined nineteenth-century genres.

This final chapter focuses on Chapman's second stay in Mexico and demonstrates how his work is atypical of travel-art and landscape paintings of the region during the nineteenth century. Particular attention is given to a sketchbook used by the artist in August of 1896, and the chapter will concentrate on one sketch of the city of Puebla titled, *Puebla: August 21st – 1896* (Figure 20). The sketch depicts a horizon view of the city from a high vantage point. Through this investigation of Chapman's later Mexican works it is suggested that this drawing may have inspired the painting titled, *Desde una azotea en Puebla* (“From a Rooftop in Puebla”) painted in 1901 (Figure 21). The observation and analysis of this piece and other paintings produced during this later period reveals Chapman's unique process and motivations. The investigation of these works will contribute to the scholarship on the artist, which in the past has highlighted only the

⁹⁷ María Elena Altamirano Piolle, *José María Velasco: Landscapes of Light, Horizons of the Modern Era* (Mexico City: Museo Nacional de Arte, 1993), 359.

early Mexican and Civil War paintings, and will allow us to gain a better understanding of Chapman's artistic methods and inspiration.

Chapman's later years in Mexico

Before exploring Chapman's later Mexican oeuvre we must first discuss some of the logistics of the artist's later travels in Mexico. As noted in the previous chapter, Chapman was working and living in Mexico until 1866. In February of 1867, he traveled to Mexico City where he stayed for a few months before returning to Europe.⁹⁸ The fall of Maximilian's regime that year and the subsequent change in leadership precipitated a revision in attitude towards Americans, and in particular Confederates.⁹⁹

Chapman returned to Europe in 1867. However, it appears that Mexico was still very much on his mind. Before departing Mexico, the artist received a commission from a British entrepreneur named W.R. Jolly, who requested a painted landscape that would include and give particular attention to the businessman's tile factory.¹⁰⁰ Chapman started the landscape in Mexico City and upon leaving had the painting shipped to Europe.¹⁰¹ Though Chapman's assignment was to capture Jolly's factory in a picturesque Mexican landscape, the artist reduced

⁹⁸ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 208.

⁹⁹ During the Civil War the Confederacy and the Maximilian government had diplomatic relations resulting in the amicable trade of various goods. The surrender of the Confederacy caused trade (and thus the relationship) between Southern United States and Mexico to unravel. Following the ousting of Maximilian, many Confederate expatriates fled further south to Brazil or returned to the United States. To find more information about the relationship between the Confederacy and Mexico during this period one may want to review the following: Ronnie Tyler, "The Age of Cotton" and "The End of an Era" in *Santiago Viadurri* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1973), p 98 – 129, or Eugene C. Harter, "Night is the beginning of the End" in *The Lost Colony of the Confederacy* (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 1985) 16 – 20.

¹⁰⁰ More information about the Jolly painting is available in Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 209 – 212.

¹⁰¹ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 222 – 223.

the structure into a secondary element and created a full scale panorama of the Valley of Mexico (Figure 22a/b). Jolly was not pleased with the final composition and subsequently cut out the part of the canvas surrounding his factory and left the remaining pieces rolled up in his attic.¹⁰² The work was found in an attic many years later and then disappeared again. Today only a black and white photograph of the work in its entirety remains and the canvas's location is unknown.¹⁰³

Following the completion of this work, Chapman spent the years between 1867 and 1883 traveling between England, Italy and France painting and selling his works. Sometime in the early 1880s Chapman met and married Anne Marie Martin. Bassham writes that Chapman's wife's family members lived and worked as hotelkeepers in Mexico and suggested that the newly married couple join them because Chapman's ability to speak Spanish might assist them in their business venture.¹⁰⁴ Thus, in 1883 Chapman returned to Mexico at the encouragement of his wife's relatives. Chapman and his wife briefly lived with her family in Guanajuato, a state in the center of the country located northwest of the capital. The couple for unknown reasons soon moved to Mexico City.¹⁰⁵

Since he received a commission during his last stay in Mexico City, it is probable that Chapman left Guanajuato because the capital city provided more opportunities for him to sell his art. In the 1880's Mexico City grew rapidly due to a stable economy under President Porfirio Díaz who had come to power in 1876. The economic prosperity among the wealthier and upper middle class echelons of society resulted in a conflicting desire to develop a national character

¹⁰² Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 222 – 223.

¹⁰³ Bassham, 222 – 223. To read more about the mid-nineteenth discovery of the *Valley of Mexico* please reference James Ford, "Conrad Wise Chapman's *Valley of Mexico*," in *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, October 1942, 43-36 or Bernard Denvir, "Nineteenth-Century Mexican Art." *The Connoisseur* 138 (May 1956), 238.

¹⁰⁴ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 263.

¹⁰⁵ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 263.

through an adoption of European style and manners. The scholar Michael Johns writes that politicians encouraged and facilitated this Europeanization because of their hope of achieving their vision of an urbanized and “civilized” Mexico.¹⁰⁶ This incongruous aspiration to create a national character by utilizing the styles applicable to the identity of other nations was accomplished through the installation of neoclassical styled monuments dedicated to Mexican history, such as those along the Paseo de La Reforma in Mexico City.¹⁰⁷

Examples of this union in art between European ideas of culture and Mexico’s search for a national identity are found in Stacie Widdifield’s *Embodiment of the National in late nineteenth-century Mexican painting*. In this text, Widdifield explains the importance of the academy and how artists reflected Mexico’s history by utilizing this fusion.¹⁰⁸ Among the artists discussed by Widdifield is José María Velasco, the Mexican landscapist quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Velasco’s depictions of the Mexican landscape in the academic style earned him an award at the Philadelphia Exposition in 1875 and made his work known internationally.¹⁰⁹ This success authenticated the country’s physical characteristics and highlighted the growing infrastructure.¹¹⁰

Velasco’s *El Citlaltepetl* demonstrates the use of the Mexican landscape to highlight social and economic changes (Figure 23). In this work, the viewer stands overlooking a fecund

¹⁰⁶ Michael Johns, *The City of Mexico in the Age of Diaz*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), 2 – 15.

¹⁰⁷ Michael Johns, *The City of Mexico in the Age of Diaz*, 24 - 29. Also for more information about the history of these neoclassical styled monuments along the Paseo de la Reforma readers can visit Claudia Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress: Modernization and Public Health in Mexico City, 1876 – 1910* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2003).

¹⁰⁸ Stacie G. Widdifield, *The Embodiment of the National in late nineteenth-century Mexican painting*, (Tuscan: University of Arizona Press, 1996) 40 – 43.

¹⁰⁹ Widdifield, *The Embodiment of the National in late nineteenth-century Mexican painting*, 69-71.

¹¹⁰ Widdifield, *The Embodiment of the National in late nineteenth-century Mexican painting*, 68.

valley framed by two ridges. The foreground highlights the lush flora and native plants while the background incorporates a dramatic mountain skyline. A railroad track cuts through the landscape, crossing along the horizon and then reappearing along the right ridge in the foreground. The train, presumably carrying people or goods across Mexico, travels along the track closest to the viewer, about to pass through our visual field.

The position from which Velasco views the scene is reflective of the magisterial gaze discussed in Chapter 1, while the use of plant life as a framing device demonstrates a continued adherence to the Claudian formula. In addition, two aspects of Velasco's painting support our understanding of Chapman's continued desire to use Mexico as his source of inspiration. First, the popularity of Velasco's painting suggests that the traveler-artist style of continued observation combined with a picturesque quality had morphed into a genre that embodied the emergence of a national focus on the country's landscape. Secondly, Velasco's inclusion of new technology into a bucolic and previously untouched environment shows a change in theme of which Chapman must have been aware when sketching and painting in Mexico during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Following Velasco's success at international expositions, the demand for landscapes painted in this manner increased along with a growing enthusiasm for arts in the capital city.¹¹¹ Esther Acevedo writes that the popularity of landscape art in the late nineteenth century represented "not a withdrawal from daily life, but a personal experience of it."¹¹² Acevedo's statement also resonates with our understanding of Chapman's work as a soldier for the Confederate army and as a young man in Mexico; all of his inspiration came from his own personal life experiences. Thus, while Chapman's work was significantly different from

¹¹¹ Acevedo, *Mexico: A Landscape Revisited*, 21.

¹¹² Acevedo, *Mexico: A Landscape Revisited*, 23.

landscape artists like Velasco, the personal connection and his European formatting may have made his paintings desirable to wealthy and upper middle class individuals in Mexico. The fusion between academic works and the popularity of landscape painting thus supported Chapman's move to Mexico City.

In Mexico City, Chapman displayed his work in various shops but made most of his money painting and coloring photographs.¹¹³ Though the work was not ideal, Chapman was proud of his skills and wrote to his brother: "I have a reputation here as a painter of photographs, but I do not find that it in anyway deprecates my work as an artist when I have an occasion to show what I can do in that way."¹¹⁴ Chapman's willingness to work outside of painting suggests both a devotion to the medium and a disregard toward his father who disapproved of artists retreating from their capabilities.¹¹⁵ In addition, this occupation may have been a practical decision, for Chapman could no longer continue to travel around living off of charity or money received from the few paintings he was able to sell, as he now had a wife to support. Chapman's decision to create a career out of his artistic desires shows a sign of maturity and practicality that was not displayed as a younger artist.

In 1889 Anne Marie succumbed to an "apoplexy attack," a condition similar to a brain aneurysm. This sent Chapman into a severe depression and unable to care for himself or anyone else. He therefore left Mexico for France.¹¹⁶ The loss of his wife drained Chapman of all his artistic ambition and he began giving away paintings and colored photographs for the "pleasure of giving it to the owner."¹¹⁷ Laura Seager Chapman (Chapman's second wife) wrote in her

¹¹³ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 263.

¹¹⁴ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 264.

¹¹⁵ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 264.

¹¹⁶ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 266-267.

¹¹⁷ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 267.

handwritten biography of Chapman that a close friend from Mexico City named Auguste Genin coaxed Chapman back from Europe in 1892 and helped him secure another job as a painter of photographs.¹¹⁸ After settling once again in Mexico City, Chapman met and married Laura Seager and gifted her with a miniaturist copy of a painting entitled *View of Mexico City from Hacienda de los Morales*, a work that exemplifies Chapman's interpretation of the changing Mexican landscape.

As we know from Chapter 2, Chapman sometimes created numerous versions of his works. For his own scholarly purposes of documentation, Bassham procured a black and white photograph of a replica of the work which belonged to a British diplomat named Frances Stronge (Figure 24).¹¹⁹ Chapman also painted a larger version of the work in 1901 which currently resides in the collection of the Valentine Richmond History Center (Figure 25). The two paintings are nearly identical and provide evidence of the changing relationship between Mexico's growing economy and the natural landscape. In the foreground Chapman has depicted the bucolic daily life of the hacienda. An observer sees women working near a creek while two men engrossed in conversation stand near the homestead. The main house of the hacienda is surrounded with native plants. The viewer can see the sprawl of Mexico City. The space between the activity in the foreground and the city in the background is rural but scarred with roads and peppered with small buildings. Mountains, so far in the distance that they appear to fade into the hazy air, contrast with the evidence of western civilization and emphasize this hacienda's role as a union of these two different scenes of Mexico.

The underlying theme of this work is arguably similar to the depiction of Velasco's Mexican landscape in *El Citlaltepētli*. Chapman's use of characters and their daily rituals

¹¹⁸ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 267.

¹¹⁹ Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman*, 267.

humanize the work and make it less formal when contrasted with Velasco's epic portrayal of the relationship between the natural world and growing economy. While Chapman did not present the disparity between technologies and land as overtly as Velasco, he created a landscape that emphasizes the development of the rural area around Mexico City. Chapman, as we have seen in this (and previous) works, favored the insertion of daily life and human involvement in his paintings and paid less attention to the topographical, geographical or scientific aspects of the landscape. *View of Mexico City from Hacienda de los Morales*, like the earlier painting titled *The Well* (Figure 2), serves as a snapshot of daily life that embodies the truth or essence of the environment as it was experienced by Chapman. Where works by Velasco made obvious statements about the developing economy through the production of impressive, timeless, and picturesque landscapes, Chapman captured the changes in Mexico through his documentation of daily life. This characteristic makes Chapman's late nineteenth century paintings different from the works of artists like Velasco.

Chapman and his sketchbook

The sketch titled *Puebla: August 21st – 1896* supports the assertion that Chapman's works deviate from those produced by other landscape and traveler-artists (Figure 20). However, before we discuss this sketch and the inspired painting it is necessary to introduce the sketchbook as a whole. The notebook in reference was found in a dusty box at the Valentine Richmond History Center along with many other watercolor and oil sketches produced by Chapman presumably sometime after he left Virginia, between 1870 and 1910.¹²⁰ The other works in the box were

¹²⁰ This assertion is made because when the Valentine Richmond History Center restructured their mission statement they decided to sell items from the collection that did not relate directly to Richmond or Virginia history. Thus, according to deaccession records the majority of works

deaccessioned in 2003 but were not sold at auction. Thus, they remain in an indeterminate state, as these works are no longer a part of the collection, but still reside in the museum.

The sketchbook is 4 3/4" x 8" and bound with a brown cloth. Pages one through thirty-six contain a multitude of sketches which depict landscapes, daily life, still life drawing and even portraits. All are dated 1896 and sketched in or around the towns of Puebla and Choula; only one is dated as "Alexandria, 18th May 1910". On page forty-six, the notebook transitions into the artist's diary from 1910 and details Chapman's mundane activities including conversations with neighbors and concern over his and Laura's missing cat. The ramblings of the elderly Chapman continue throughout the remainder of the notebook, but interspersed are various still life and landscape sketches from both Mexico and Virginia. For example, on page forty-eight we find an undated watercolor and pencil composition of Mexican cowboys, only to be followed by a journal entry regarding daily life in Hampton, Virginia (Figure 26 a/b).

The sketchbook has been reviewed by scholars and has been addressed in both Bassham's text and the exhibition catalogue, *Conrad Wise Chapman: 1842 – 1910*, which was produced by the Valentine Museum in 1962.¹²¹ Both texts focus on the diary entries as important evidence of Chapman's state of mind during the last months of his life. The sketches of the Mexican countryside which dominate the first half of this book have never been discussed as a result of a singular focus on the artist's early years in Mexico and the works he created as a Confederate soldier.

that were deaccessioned were produced by Chapman when he lived outside of Virginia. Thus, the works in this box were produced sometime between 1870 and 1900 while Chapman was traveling throughout Europe and Mexico. In addition, there are no works in this box from Chapman's early Mexican period.

¹²¹ Valentine Museum, *Conrad Wise Chapman, 1842-1910; an Exhibition of his Works in the Valentine Museum, Richmond, 1962* (Richmond: Valentine Museum, 1962).

Since there are only a few later Mexican landscapes by Chapman in public collections it is difficult to determine which sketches from this notebook served as the inspiration for actual paintings. The pencil sketch of Puebla appears to be the most compositionally complete of the sketches and may have served as the inspiration for a later painting titled *Desde una azotea de Puebla* (Figure 21). In this work Chapman has captured the city skyline from a high vantage point, perhaps a rooftop. The detailed architectural features of various churches are supplemented with notes indicating the specific colors and hues of each structure. The background consists of the outline of a large mountain with a noticeably pointed peak which resembles Popocatépetl, the second largest mountain in Mexico. Chapman notes in the sketch that the mountain hue should be violet, suggesting that the illustration was of a sunrise, or if the mountain is Popocatépetl, of a sunset.

It is unclear what Chapman was doing in Puebla in 1896, however it is possible that he was attracted to the city because of the large concentration of late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century architecture. Puebla is approximately sixty miles east of Mexico City. Founded in 1531, the city boasts approximately seventy-two churches in the historic district.¹²² During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the city attracted visitors who were traveling to Mexico City from the port city of Veracruz.¹²³ Chapman, traveling through the city, might have been attracted to its cityscape because, like the Bishop's Palace in Monterrey, the architecture was reminiscent of Rome, with its numerous Catholic churches. He may have climbed to a rooftop in an effort to capture a birds-eye view of the similarities between these two urban areas located on different continents.

¹²² Daniel Arreola, "Nineteenth-Century Townscapes of Eastern Mexico," in *Geographical Review*, (Vol. 72, No. 1, Jan., 1982), 14.

¹²³ Arreola "Nineteenth-Century Townscapes of Eastern Mexico," 14.

Chapman's notations allowed him to later transfer details of the scene into his painting. Furthermore, Chapman's comments allow us to identify one of the churches included in the work. On the dome of the church featured on the far right of the composition, Chapman has indicated that the cupola is to be painted dark blue and yellow and has sketched a "V" style pattern. This pattern and coloring closely matches the archetype of the cupola of the *Templo y Convento de San Joaquin y Santa Ana o de las Religiosas Capuchinas* (Figure 27). Though Chapman has not included the detail of the windows, we can tell from the provided pattern that the cupola resembles the blue and gold tiled dome.

Templo de las Capuchinas, as it is often called, is located on Calle 16 de Septiembre and was built in the early eighteenth century.¹²⁴ The church is considered to be one of the most ornate in the city, particularly because of a gilded altar and a well known painting dedicated to the Virgin Mary.¹²⁵ The pattern sketched by Chapman on the dome is actually a bright design created with traditional Talavera tile. This type of majolica pottery was brought to Mexico from Spain during the colonial period and is called Talavera because missionaries found that the clay near Puebla was very similar to that found in Talavera, Spain.¹²⁶ The church is located within a block of a number of other churches and cathedrals which means that the bell tower sketched in the center of the panorama could be one of the following: the Temple of the Immaculate Conception, the Church of San Felipe Neri or the Church of Saint Ines. To complicate the identification of this church even further, Chapman indicates the color of the bell tower as "Roman white" (evidence again that Chapman was inspired by his home-city of Rome) and

¹²⁴ Quetzalina Sánchez Muñoz et al, *Las Iglesias de la Puebla de los Angeles* (Puebla: Secretaría de Cultura Puebla, 2001), 206.

¹²⁵ Muñoz et al, *Las Iglesias de la Puebla de los Angeles*, 207.

¹²⁶ For more information on traditional Talavera ceramics one might reference Marian Harvey, "Talavera de la Reina" in *Mexican Crafts and Craftspeople* (Cranbury: Associated University Press, 1987), 96 – 101.

suggests that the embellishments be “terra” or “pink.” Based on this evidence it is also possible that this could be a representation of La Iglesia de Compañía, which is also located nearby (Figure 28). Unfortunately, without being in Puebla to walk through the neighborhood, it is impossible to be certain that this view of the city accurately depicts the cityscape.

There are no other sketches of this panorama in the sketchbook and we have no other record of Chapman traveling to Puebla in the next several years. However, the work foreshadows a 1901 painting, *Desde una Azotea de Puebla*, produced by Chapman and auctioned by Sotheby’s in 2006 (Figure 21). As the title implies, Chapman has captured the view of Puebla from the rooftop of a city structure. The rooftops of other buildings appear in the foreground painted in various shades of white, tan and terra cotta. The layout of the cityscape is similar to the sketch, with the domed structure appearing on the right side of the canvas and the church bell tower in the center.

The work is not an exact replica of Chapman’s sketch. First, the dome and the steeple do not appear to be on the same horizon line and the tower appears to be substantially further away from the dome and the viewer. The mountains in this work are graduated rolling hills which transition into the softly painted but large snowcapped mountain located on the left side of the canvas. In addition, the colors are more muted than in Chapman’s previous works and we find that he has painted more greenery around the church steeple and throughout the scene.

Despite these differences, the similarities are striking. The layout of the landscape, as well as the perspective and the structures, are reminiscent of the original sketch. In addition, when looking closely at the dome on the left there is a faint indication of yellow. This suggests that the painted dome was inspired by the sketch of *Templo de las Capuchinas*. The resemblance between the two works demonstrates that though *Desde una Azotea de Puebla* does not reflect

the exact details of the sketch, it was inspired by and conceived of during Chapman's visit in 1896. The relationship between these two works demonstrates that Chapman's artistic process allowed him to utilize the sketches he created to manipulate the natural world in order to create a more aesthetically pleasing landscape.

As discussed previously, traveler-artists defined by Diener as an "autonomous" type used art as a means of conveying information about the location to a viewer for scientific, economic or political reasons. This characteristic is not apparent in cityscape of Puebla. Chapman has focused more on the essence of the location than on the details of each building. To do this Chapman appears to have relied on his memory, which resulted in changing colors or locations and (in other works like *Hacienda de los Morales*) the presence of human involvement to seize aspects of the world he believed to be significant to the overall composition.

Chapman's interest in portraying the essence rather than the details in this painting (and others he produced during this period) may have been related to the change in the reception of landscape paintings, such as those produced by Jose Maria Velasco. The popularity of Mexican landscapes may have caused Chapman's shift in style, from personal to picturesque. The purpose was no longer to document experiences, rather, Chapman was interested in selling his works. Thus he manipulated details, colors and organizations to create a more compositionally complete work that would have been well received.

Based on our previous analysis of Chapman's work, the two renditions of the cityscape of Puebla demonstrate less of an interest in attaining topographic details and greater focus on recapturing the essence or familiarity of the landscape on paper or canvas – a quality that makes him atypical of landscape traveler-artists. In addition, Chapman's comments written on the Puebla sketch regarding light and color suggest an interest in encapsulating the way the

landscape appears to him instead of a focus on the details. It is this quality which indicates that Chapman's art during the later half of the nineteenth century had moved away from traditional traveler-artist characteristics.

I do not intend to suggest that Chapman's oeuvre be omitted from art historical study alongside other nineteenth-century landscapists or traveler-artists. Rather, the purpose of this section and this thesis is to explain that Chapman's later paintings are uncharacteristic and thus a combination of both genres during this period. These differences are particularly apparent in Chapman's sketchbook in which we see the artist's continued attempts at encapsulating the essence of the place without an intense concentration on the identifying features of the location.

Chapman's work during the late nineteenth century does not fit alongside his contemporaries who are considered to be traveler-artists or landscape painters. It instead represents an atypical blend of traveler-art and landscape painting that was the result of his father's tutelage and the enjoyment that Chapman found in portraying the world around him. Chapman's experiences and affinity for exploration make him similar to other traveler-artists of the period; however, his disinterest in the precise details of location or nature make his work unconventional. Chapman's desire to capture the picturesque does not fit into the mold of other landscapists in Mexico either. While the thematic focus may be similar, the inclusion of the mundane results in a composition that is less poignant in its commentary. It is in Chapman's later works that we see that the artist's motivations revolved around both the beautiful and original examples of nature and daily life in Mexico; features which Velasco lamented had gone unnoticed.

Conclusion

Conrad Wise Chapman and his wife Laura Seager Chapman traveled back and forth between the United States and Mexico City several times between 1901 and 1908. In 1908 Chapman suffered from an undiagnosed illness. The doctors recommended that the altitude of Mexico City was a contributing factor to his deteriorating health and that his wellbeing might improve if they moved elsewhere. Thus, the artist and his wife decided to return to Virginia. After spending a few months in Richmond, the two ultimately moved to a cottage in Hampton, Virginia.¹²⁷

Though Chapman continued to paint, he received very few commissions. His final project focused on studies of portraits of Stonewall Jackson and other Confederate generals. Chapman detailed daily occurrences of the last few months of his life in the diary discussed in Chapter 3. In the summer of 1910, Chapman's health declined, and he passed away on December 10 of that year.¹²⁸ Laura Seager Chapman, at her husband's request, sent a large number of drawings, oil sketches, prints and finished paintings to the Library of Virginia.¹²⁹ This action secured the future of Chapman's works, ensuring that they would be displayed in museums and discussed in the years to come.

While Chapman has been traditionally considered a soldier-artist of the Confederacy in the years since his death, the works produced in Mexico provide historical images of the country

¹²⁷ Bassham, 277.

¹²⁸ Bassham, 285-286.

¹²⁹ Bassham, 286.

during the nineteenth century. These aesthetically attractive landscapes illustrate histories that are seldom discussed and some that are perhaps forgotten: of Confederate colonists in Mexico, of traveler-artists in Latin America and of the close relationship between landscape painting and traveler-art.

Chapman produced more than 800 works in his lifetime, most of which are beyond the scope of this study. However, through the research for this thesis it has become apparent that Chapman's paintings and sketches of Mexico demonstrate the inherent desire by the artist to capture a view of a landscape as if it were his first. While these artworks embody characteristics of both landscape painting and traveler-art, they also show that Chapman's primary goal was to document and emulate the moment in which a scene came into his view.

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