

THE CAPITOL DOME



The Capitol in the Movies

John Quincy Adams and Speakers of the House

Irish Artists in the Capitol Complex

Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way

STEAM DIPLOMACY: SENDING A SUBTLE MESSAGE IN LEUTZE'S *WESTWARD HO!*

by John Laurence Busch

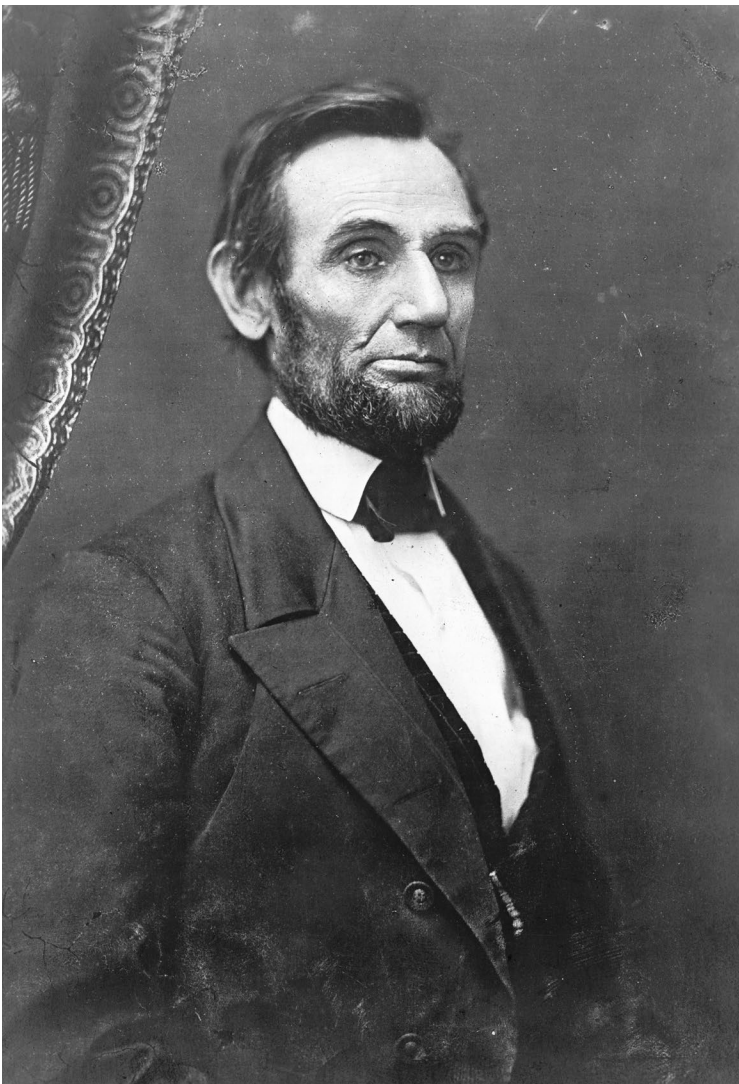


Fig. 1. President-elect Abraham Lincoln, photographed in January 1861 by Christopher S. German (1841–1896)

By Wednesday morning, the 7th of November 1860, sufficient election returns had been reported so as to leave little doubt: Abraham Lincoln (fig. 1) had been elected president of the United States. Despite only winning about 40 percent of the popular vote, his margin of victory in the Electoral College had been substantial, comfortably giving him virtually all of the electoral votes for states north of the Mason-Dixon Line (fig. 2).

It took well over a week for returns from the far-flung, still-new states of California and Oregon to come in, and there, it was a different story. In California, Lincoln's plurality over nearest rival Stephen Douglas was a bit over 700 votes, and in Oregon, his lead over opponent John Breckinridge was around 300 votes. No other states gave Lincoln such a narrow margin of victory. It was, as the president-elect later declared, "the closest political bookkeeping that I know of."¹

Immediately, the southern slave-holding states began to agitate for secession. Lincoln tried to placate them, but to no avail; his many speeches, over many years, against slavery convinced the South that they had no choice but to make preparations to declare their independence from the United States and create their own Confederate States of America.

Geographically, the split-up in the East was—with the exception of a handful of border states—fairly clear. But in the West, the situation was not nearly as obvious. Beyond a line of states stretching

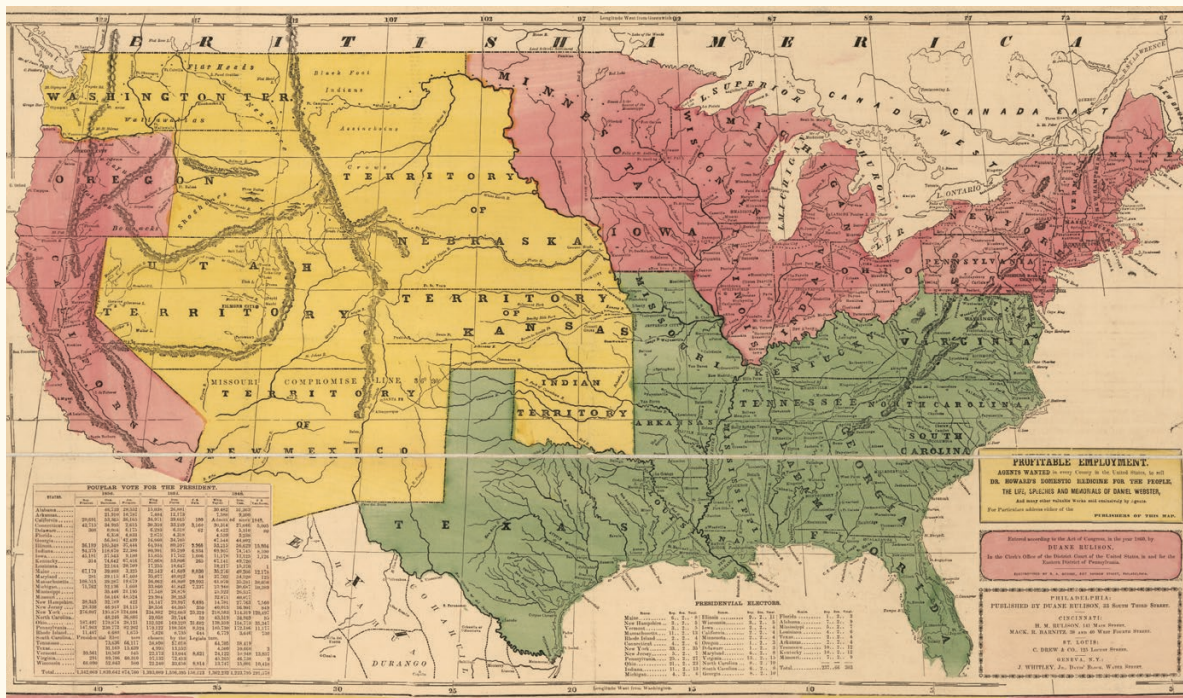


Fig. 2. This 1860 map of the United States, published by Duane Rulison, shows states that voted for Lincoln in red; all non-voting territories in yellow; and states voting for one of the other three candidates in green.

from Minnesota in the north to Texas in the south, the country was a collection of sparsely-populated territories and—at the westernmost extremity, bordering the Pacific Ocean—the equally lightly-settled states of California and Oregon. The only means of communication with those far-flung states and territories was the stagecoach, the popularly-named Pony Express mail service, and sporadic sail- and steam-vessel visits to river and coastal ports. Further clouding the western scene were the periodic pronouncements by some Californians that, if they didn't like the way they were treated within the Union, then their state just might declare itself a republic and go its own way.

When the lame-duck Thirty-Sixth Congress returned to Washington in December of 1860, not only was the status of the South in question; so was that of the West.

But in the mind of one U.S. senator, the West had already been won. Sen. William H. Seward (fig. 3) of New York had been

Lincoln's principal rival for the Republican presidential nomination. He also had played an important role back in 1850, when—in what some called the “War of the Giants”—he fervently supported California’s petition for statehood. And with the admission of the free state of Kansas in January 1861, he rose yet again in the Senate, to ask: “Kansas is in the Union, California and Oregon are in the Union,... What is the extent of the Territories which remain...How many slaves are there in it?” The answer, Seward declared, was 24—just two dozen slaves in all the Territories. The issue of slavery in the West, he continued, “has ceased to be a practical question.”²

Seward’s widely-reported speech helped secure the West for the Union as the slave-holding southern states began to secede. It also very likely further convinced President-elect Lincoln to select the New Yorker to be the next secretary of state.

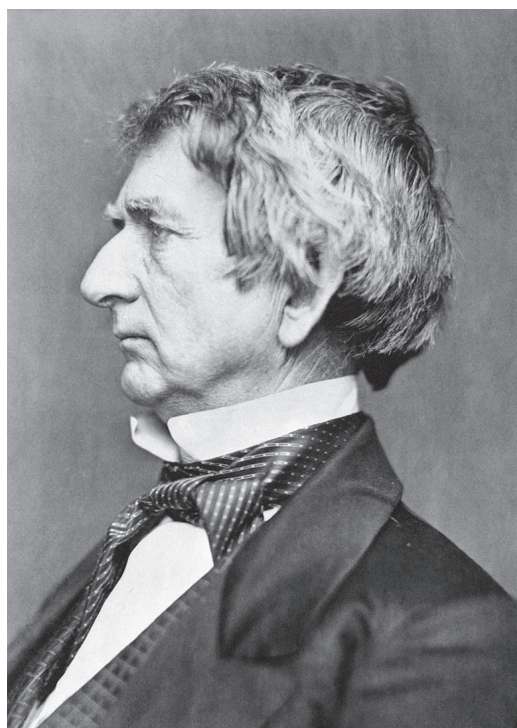


Fig. 3. William Henry Seward, photographed as a senator in 1859 by Julian Vannerson (1827–?), was later nominated and confirmed as secretary of state.

As states, soldiers, and siblings chose sides and the rebellion took form, at least some parts of the



Fig. 4. Numerous acquaintances described artist Emanuel Leutze as an amiable and kind man. Napoleon Sarony (1821–1896) took this photograph in the 1860s.

federal government carried on as before. The newly expanded Capitol, with new House of Representatives and Senate chambers, needed decorating. Prominent among the many new spaces were four enormous 20- by 30-foot walls that formed part of the staircases which led to the visitors galleries for both chambers. Montgomery Meigs—the U.S. Army officer responsible for overseeing the Capitol’s expansion—had spent years trying to hire artists to paint one or more of these walls. By early 1861, he had finally succeeded in lining up someone to do so, by the name of Emanuel Leutze.³

Leutze (fig. 4) was a German-born immigrant who had gained great fame as the creator of *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, which had made both the painter and the painting household names in 1850s America. For the southwestern staircase of the House, Leutze had for some time proposed painting a depiction of emigrants heading west. With Meigs suitably impressed by the concept, Leutze began painting a two-and-a-half by three-foot study, to show more precisely what he had in mind.



It didn’t take long for the Confederacy to begin target-

ing the West. Shortly after Lincoln’s inauguration in March 1861, Union newspapers were foaming about plots to “revolutionize” California and Oregon. Later that spring, reports reached the White House that a rebel force was headed to El Paso, Texas, with the objective of invading the New Mexico Territory and pushing even further west to conquer southern California. There was even information reaching Washington which, as Seward put it, “wears an air of authenticity,” that suggested the rebels were planning to seize Mexico’s Lower California and use it as a base to attack shipping along the Pacific coast.⁴

The president, overwhelmed by an avalanche of events in the East, instructed Seward and the State Department to thwart this threat to the West.⁵



Near the end of spring 1861, Leutze had completed his study of what would be called *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way*, which was shown to not only Montgomery Meigs, but to Members of Congress, the president, and members of his cabinet.

The study depicted a wagon train of emigrants laboriously struggling to the top of a mountain pass, with a view to the west of fertile land bathed in a setting sun. At the bottom was a separate, thin panoramic view of the entrance to San Francisco Bay, with a small collection of sailing vessels well within the bay, seemingly just off San Francisco, which was shielded from view by a ridgeline. All of these vessels were framed—and seemingly protected—by the fortifications at Fort Point on the right and the more distant fortifications of Alcatraz Island on the left.⁶

Among the many that were taken by Leutze’s study was William Seward. The prolific artist had painted a full-length portrait of Seward as senator in 1859 and would complete a second portrait of him as secretary of state by the end of 1861. The two men got along quite well, which seemingly would have surprised no one who had ever met Emanuel Leutze. As one government official who knew him well declared, the artist was “a genial, kind hearted gentleman, generous to a fault, and exceedingly companionable.”⁷

Seward liked the study of *Westward* so much, that he asked Leutze if he would make a copy for him. Naturally, the artist agreed, and by mid-June was busily re-creating the study for Seward. This copy would not always have the same detail as the original study; the



Fig. 5. *Leutze's second study of Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way was painted expressly for William Seward. (The painting is also known by the shorthand Westward Ho!)*

San Francisco Bay scene, for example, depicted the fortifications in a rather blurry fashion, and there were no sailing vessels in the distance between the forts (fig. 5). But otherwise, it was a fine rendition.⁸

Leutze's studies and sociability did the trick. In early July, he was awarded a contract to paint *Westward* on the wall of the west staircase of the House wing, for \$20,000. With papers signed and agenda clear, the artist headed out West, to see as much of the Rockies as he could and sketch the details that would bring the painting to life.



Later that same month, a column of Confederates invaded the New Mexico Territory. After a short battle with Union troops at Mesilla, the rebels declared the little town to be the capital of their new Arizona Territory.

This addition to the Confederacy stretched—according to the rebels—from the Texas border, through Mesilla and Tucson, and ended at the border with California.

The creation of such a long, thin territory by the Confederates sent an unmistakable message: the Golden State was at risk.



As the summer of 1861 turned to autumn, it became increasingly clear to the northern public that the rebellion was not going to end quickly. Further still, the risk of Confederate action appeared—at least from Seward's perspective—to be taking on an almost global dimension.

On the 25th of October, Seward received a dispatch from U.S. Commissioner to the Kingdom of Hawaii Thomas Dryer: "It is the opinion of nautical men here,

that even a schooner of not more than two hundred tons burden, could in one hour, with perfect ease, burn or destroy the whole whale fleet which congregates here during the winter months.” This was no small concern. The American whaling fleet in the northern Pacific was upwards of 75 vessels. Their loss would hurt not only economically, but psychologically.¹⁰

Unfortunately, the Hawaiian government of King Kamehameha (the Fourth), which was practically bankrupt, had no protection to offer the American whaling fleet. As Dryer declared, “The universal plea is the utter inability of the Hawaiian Government to prevent an armed vessel from entering the harbors. They say, ‘we have no forts, no armed vessels, no army and no cannon.’ My reply is ‘give us the best you have; if it be only paper cannon, give us that.’” This plea for protection touched a nerve in Seward, for he soon forwarded an extract from the dispatch to Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles (fig. 6).¹¹

But at that stage, there was little Welles could do. All four eastern squadrons of the U.S. Navy were fully occupied with a publicly-declared blockade of Confederate ports, and the Navy’s Pacific Squadron—with about 8 armed vessels—had its hands full trying to patrol from the coast of the Washington Territory all the way down to Panama. There simply were no vessels

to spare.¹²

Closer to home—in the Gulf of Mexico—the situation was about to become even more complicated. The Republic of Mexico had borrowed heavily from the major European powers, particularly Great Britain, France, and Spain. Unable to service this debt, Mexico had defaulted on its loans in July 1861.

The European “allies,” as they came to be called, reacted with fury. Newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic were soon filled with speculation that if the Mexicans did not honor their obligations, the allies would send a military force to compel them to pay up.

Such an action by the European powers would be a gross violation of the Monroe Doctrine. This policy, initiated by Pres. James Monroe in 1823, declared that any European armed intervention in the Americas would not be tolerated by the United States. But given the ongoing rebellion, the Union was hardly in a position to enforce it. Seward had already been charged by the president with preventing the use of Mexican ports by Confederate armed vessels. The potential for a large European naval force in the Gulf of Mexico introduced yet another complexity to his task.

The danger soon became even more unsettling. Diplomatic dispatches received in early November from U.S. Minister to Spain Carl Schurz and U.S. Minister to France William Dayton indicated that some of the Europeans might want a lot more than just money. Schurz reported that the Spanish press and some government officials were talking of encouraging the Mexicans to call a national congress “for the purpose of voting a constitutional monarchy and electing a king.” Dayton added that the more precise plot involved having a member of Spain’s royal family “called upon by the people of Mexico to assume the throne.”¹³

These purported intrigues did not overly bother Seward, who replied to Dayton:

We cannot observe the proceedings of France, Great Britain and Spain in regard to Mexico without deep concern. But the effects upon our interests are likely to be only incidental. If it were possible that we should lose our national integrity, there is no knowing how we should stay its foreign consequences. Since, however, I feel well assured that we shall restore the power and the prestige of the Union in good time I am not disturbed by the external accidents of the war.¹⁴

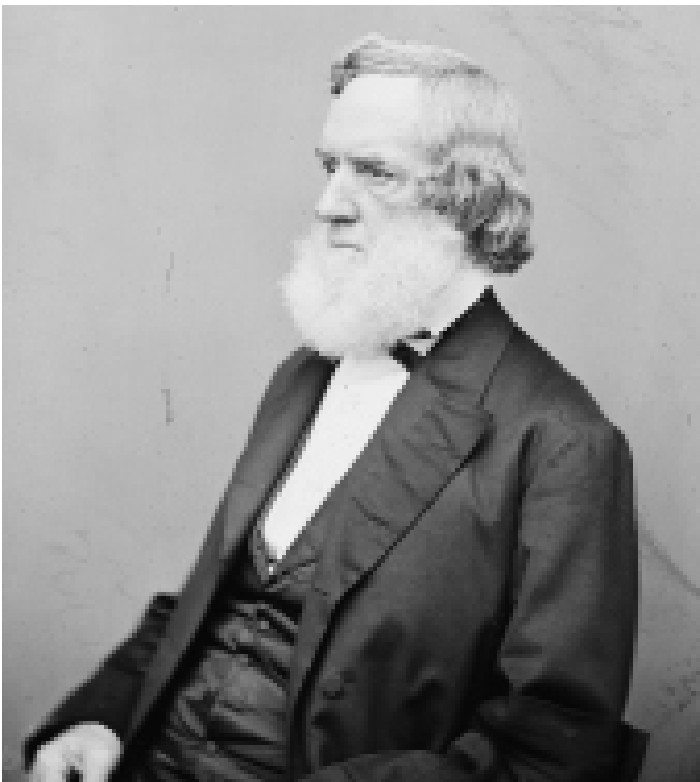


Fig. 6. Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, c. 1860s

Perhaps contributing to Seward's sanguine expectations was the recent news that after a Herculean three-and-a-half month effort, the transcontinental telegraph had been completed in late October 1861. California and Oregon, while still isolated, must have suddenly seemed a little bit closer to the Union.



In the midst of growing reports of possible allied action against Mexico, Emanuel Leutze returned to Washington. His trip to the Rockies had been a success; he was now armed with ample drawings of the mountains, as well as the pioneers who were making a new life for themselves out on the frontier.

By late October, the artist had set up a studio in a room reserved for him in the Capitol. With everything he needed now at hand—workspace, sketches, supplies, and vision—Emanuel Leutze began to paint.¹⁵



As 1861 drew toward a close, the war's complications multiplied.

In mid-November, a Union warship yanked two Confederate diplomats off a British-flagged vessel, the *Trent*, igniting a firestorm of criticism across the pond. Some British newspapers didn't just want the diplomats released; they wanted a declaration of war against the United States.

At precisely the same time that the *Trent* affair was inflaming the press on both sides of the Atlantic, fleets of the British, French, and Spanish navies steamed and sailed west. Their destination: Vera Cruz, Mexico. The allies had agreed on a plan of action to compel Mexico to honor its debts, at the point of many guns.

The Spanish navy arrived first, in mid-December, and the 6,000 soldiers brought along quickly occupied Vera Cruz. By early January 1862, the French and British fleets arrived. In total, the allies had mustered more than 30 warships and over 9,000 troops for what some Europeans termed a "bondholders' war."¹⁶

To the Americans, the true purpose soon looked far less benign. That the Confederates might take advantage of the Mexican crisis was obvious, and continuing rumors, both public and diplomatic, that the Spanish or the French had motives beyond money continued to bubble. Union newspapers began running stories on the precise composition and armament of the allied navies in the Gulf.¹⁷

Even the Californians began to wonder. In mid-

January, the *Sacramento Daily Union* ran a front-page article listing the "ships of war in the Pacific," and what it showed was sobering. The Union Navy's Pacific Squadron consisted of just six cruising warships and two storeships, of which only three were steam-powered, while the British had fourteen steamers out of a squadron of sixteen, and the French had two large steamers out of a squadron of five vessels. In every respect—tonnage, horsepower, and armament—the U.S. Navy in the Pacific was outgunned.¹⁸



As Washington endured its first winter of the war, Emanuel Leutze continued to paint.

The Union press took due note. "Leutze is busy at work upon his great picture for the western staircase of the House gallery," reported the *The Evening Star* of Washington, "and [it] is in many respects the finest of Mr. Leutze's works."¹⁹

Lots of people with business on Capitol Hill made a point of stopping by to see how Leutze's painting of *Westward* was coming along. They included Lincoln, Seward and, of course, many Members of Congress.

That Leutze was in the process of making a significant contribution to the building must have been clear to any observer when the government celebrated George Washington's birthday on 22 February 1862. Marching up to the Capitol and into the House chamber for the official celebration came a long procession of officials, as well as throngs of the citizenry, who packed the gallery to overflowing (fig. 7).

Nearly everyone was there: Vice Pres. Hannibal Hamlin, members of the Cabinet, the Senate, the Supreme Court, diplomats, and senior military officers, including Gen. George McClellan. So too—as a special guest on the floor of the House—was Emanuel Leutze.²⁰



Even though the *Trent* affair had been settled diplomatically, there continued to be great speculation as to whether the British or French might intervene in America's ongoing insurrection. Newspapers repeatedly fanned these rumors, including reports claiming that if the British did go on the offensive, California would certainly be attacked.²¹

By late February, the California legislature felt compelled to take action of its own, debating whether to appropriate funds for munitions and the erection of defensive works above and beyond what the federal

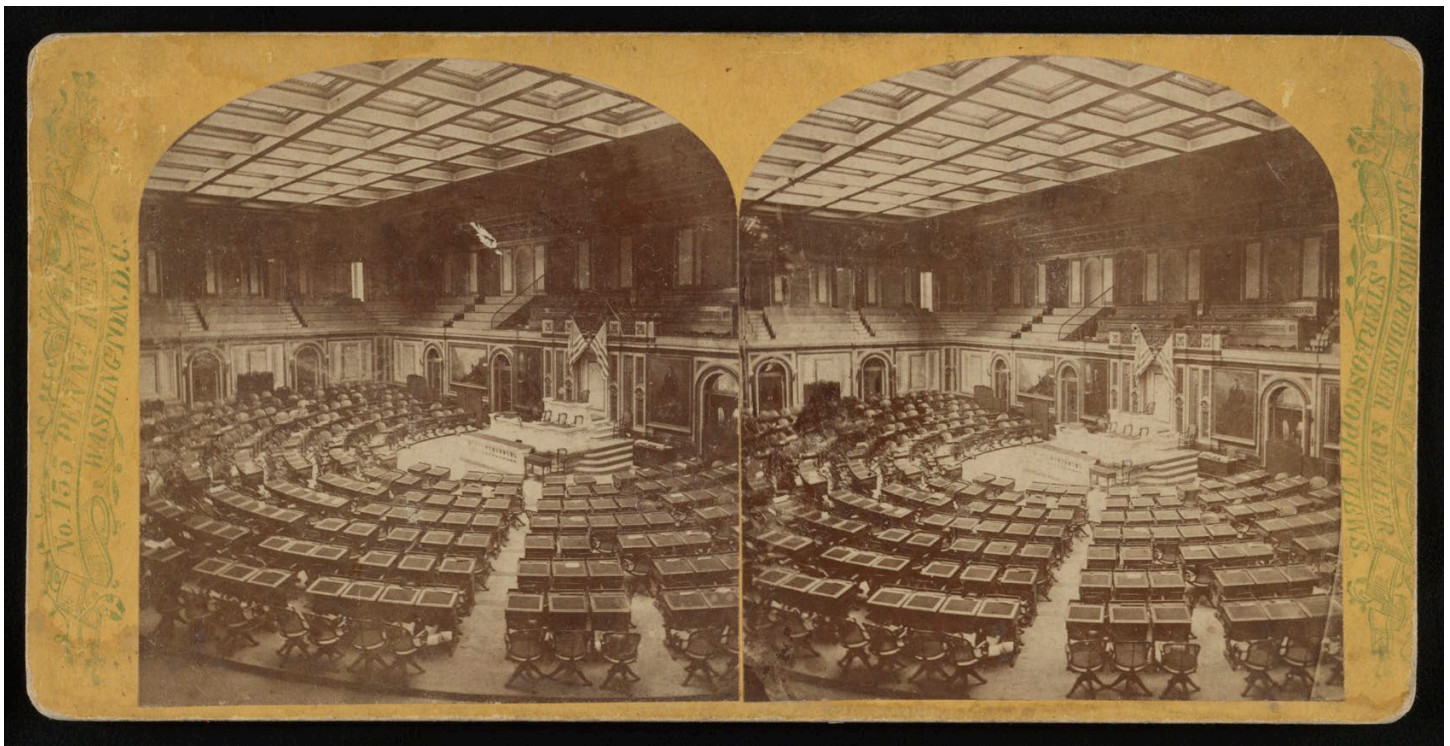


Fig. 7. This stereograph, published by John Fillis Jarvis after 1860, shows the chamber first occupied by the House in 1857. A note on the back of the stereograph suggested the galleries could hold 1500 people.

government had already completed.²² Further still, the legislature—by joint resolution—ordered Gov. Leland Stanford to send a telegraphic message to Seward, specifically asking him “...whether in the opinion of the Federal Administration, our foreign relations are at present such as to make it necessary or expedient that California should take active measures towards putting the Harbor of San Francisco in a state of defense.”²³



By early March, it had become increasingly clear to Lincoln and Seward that the situation in Mexico was getting worse—*much worse*. Accordingly, Seward felt it necessary to outline more explicitly the administration’s position to Dayton (fig. 8):

We observe indications of a growing opinion in Europe that the demonstrations which are being made by Spanish, French and British forces against Mexico, are likely to be attended by a revolution in that country which will bring in a monarchical government there in which the crown will be assumed by some foreign prince...²⁴

After noting prior European representations to the

contrary, Seward then continued:

The President...deems it his duty to express to the allies, in all candor and frankness, the opinion that no monarchical government which could be founded in Mexico, in the presence of foreign navies and armies in the waters and upon the soil of Mexico, would have any prospect of security or permanence.

By the end of the month, continuing reports of France’s imperial ambitions led Seward to ask Dayton for a more explicit, if unofficial, response from the French foreign minister, Édouard Thouvenel:

You will intimate to Mr. Thouvenel that rumors of this kind have reached the President and awakened some anxiety on his part. You will say that you are not authorized to ask explanations, but that you are sure that if any can be made which will be calculated to relieve that anxiety, they will be very welcome...²⁵

Dayton dutifully carried out these instructions and met with the French foreign minister in mid-April. His description of the response proved deeply illuminating:



Fig. 8. William L. Dayton represented New Jersey in the Senate as a Whig from 1842 to 1851. In 1856, he was the Republican Party's candidate for vice president under John C. Frémont. Lincoln appointed him minister to France 18 March 1861; he held the position until his death in Paris on 1 December 1864.

[Thouvenel] stated in reply...that they had no purpose or wish to interfere in the form of Government in Mexico. All they wanted was that there should be "a Government," not an anarchy... He said that in point of fact there was no Government in Mexico now. That if the people of that country chose to establish a republic, it was all well; France would make no objection. If they chose to establish a monarchy, as that was the form of Government here, it would be charming ("charmant")...²⁶

Such an "explanation" could hardly be seen as relieving the anxiety of Lincoln, or Seward.

By the time Dayton's dispatch arrived in Washington, snippets of State Department communications regarding Mexico, which Congress asked to see, had

found their way into American newspapers. Among the bits that editors found most tantalizing was the president's prior delegation of responsibility for thwarting any rebel threats to Mexico's Lower California to the Department of State. What had been privileged information was now public: if the west coast was lost by way of Mexico, everyone would know who to blame.²⁷



Once the spring of 1862 was well advanced, the true nature of the danger to the West Coast had become much clearer. In late March, the Confederates had been turned back at the Battle of Glorieta Pass in the New Mexico Territory. The rebel threat to the West—on land, at least—appeared to recede.

And in Mexico, the British and the Spanish—upon realizing that the French government of Emperor Napoléon III truly did have imperial ambitions—had withdrawn their forces from that country. This left the French, and Confederate raider vessels, as the primary threat to the Pacific Coast.

Congress had not been idle all the while; indeed, it had tried to do its part to bring California and Oregon closer to the East. After years of discussions and months of wrangling, it finally passed a bill for the building of a transcontinental railroad, which the president signed into law on 1 July 1862. A railroad to California would take years to build, but symbolically it sent an important message to the world: the Union was going to be connected from coast to coast, no matter what.



The very same day that the Pacific railway bill was signed into law, the Senate took up a measure to allow Emanuel Leutze to finish his work on *Westward*. With government finances stretched to the limit by the rebellion, questions had arisen as to whether efforts to decorate the Capitol should continue.

Sen. Solomon Foot of Vermont rose to offer an amendment that would exclude Leutze's *Westward* from any suspension of work. Foot argued that since much of the painting was already complete, "both economy and justice required that the picture should be completed." The Senate concurred, and Leutze was allowed to return to his task.²⁸



By late summer, it had become clear that Napoléon III

intended to double the stakes in Mexico.

Reports from France indicated that the major shipyards at Toulon, Brest, and Cherbourg were humming with activity. The French Navy was to receive a fresh supply of ships, some of which were said to be for a new French naval squadron that would be stationed in the Gulf of California, off the coast of the Mexican state of Sonora.²⁹

Why there?

Because the state of Sonora, which was just south of the New Mexico Territory and stretched all the way to the southeastern tip of California, had been and continued to be a major source of silver. The rumors circulating in Paris suggested that the French government was angling to seize Sonora and its silver, while her forces near Vera Cruz pressed inland from the east.

For the U.S. Navy, responding to such a challenge would prove difficult. While it had grown nearly five-fold since the beginning of the rebellion, the Union Navy was still concentrated overwhelmingly in the East. In fact, according to newspaper reports that October, the U.S. Pacific Squadron was listed as down to just five armed vessels capable of patrolling the coast, of which only three were steam-powered.³⁰ If France, or even a well-armed Confederate raider, tried to make a play for the California coast, the Union Navy would be hard-pressed to counter them.



As the rebellion dragged through the autumn, the need for fresh soldiers and sailors to defend the Union grew stronger. Among those newly appointed to the rank of midshipman in the Navy was Emanuel Leutze's first-born son, Eugene. On 10 October, Eugene received his first orders to report for examination at the Naval Academy, which had temporarily been moved to Newport, Rhode Island.³¹

By that time, the artist was putting the finishing touches on *Westward*. In November, newspapers began reporting that Leutze was almost done, and by month's end they were announcing that the painting would be "exposed to public view" right after Thanksgiving.³²

From that moment on, waves of visitors came to Capitol Hill to see *Westward*, day after day. The newspapers responded accordingly. Leutze's art, wrote *The [Baltimore] Sun's* local correspondent, was "a brilliant and striking representation of Western emigration." Even Leutze's arrangement to have a three-section photograph of the painting taken in early December was

considered newsworthy enough by the press to warrant a story.³³ But of all the accolades that showered *Westward*, there was none more insightful than that from the District's most widely-read newspaper, the *Daily National Intelligencer*: "It is, beyond question, the most thoroughly *national* picture that we have; the purest revelation of what is in the minds of us all—our cherished hopes and habits of thought. It flashes upon the soul in an instant, and an hour's study deepens the impression."³⁴



On Saturday, 29 November—just as the public began to see *Westward* in large numbers—Seward had the Pacific Coast on his mind. Accordingly, he wrote a letter to Welles: "A letter was received at this Department today from the Collector of Customs at San Francisco, Ira P. Rankin, Esquire, in which he states that 'it would be well if a ship of war could be kept constantly on the Northern Coast of Mexico for the protection of our interests in that quarter'..."³⁵ That Seward had forwarded this request to the Navy so quickly was telling. Clearly, he was worried about what the French might do in Mexico, or elsewhere. Within weeks, even the press thought it knew the secretary's thinking, with newspapers declaring, "It is...claimed by many intelligent persons that Mr. Seward confidently expects the intervention of the French government in our affairs, and that he has shaped the foreign diplomacy of this government of late, wholly in reference to such a danger."³⁶



As crowds continued to flock to the Hill to see *Westward* through mid-December, great political trouble was brewing elsewhere in the Capitol. The Republicans had taken a drubbing in the November congressional elections, and news from the front was yielding yet another disaster: the Union Army had been defeated at Fredericksburg, Virginia. Republican senators met in caucus and concluded that they had to force the president to make changes to his Cabinet. Their number one target was Seward, whom many thought possessed an outsized influence over Lincoln.

"The town all in a bug," wrote Attorney Gen. Edward Bates in his diary, "all the Cabinet to resign—new schemes + programs in abundance."³⁷

Seward actually did tender his resignation to the president, but Lincoln deftly held off accepting it, while

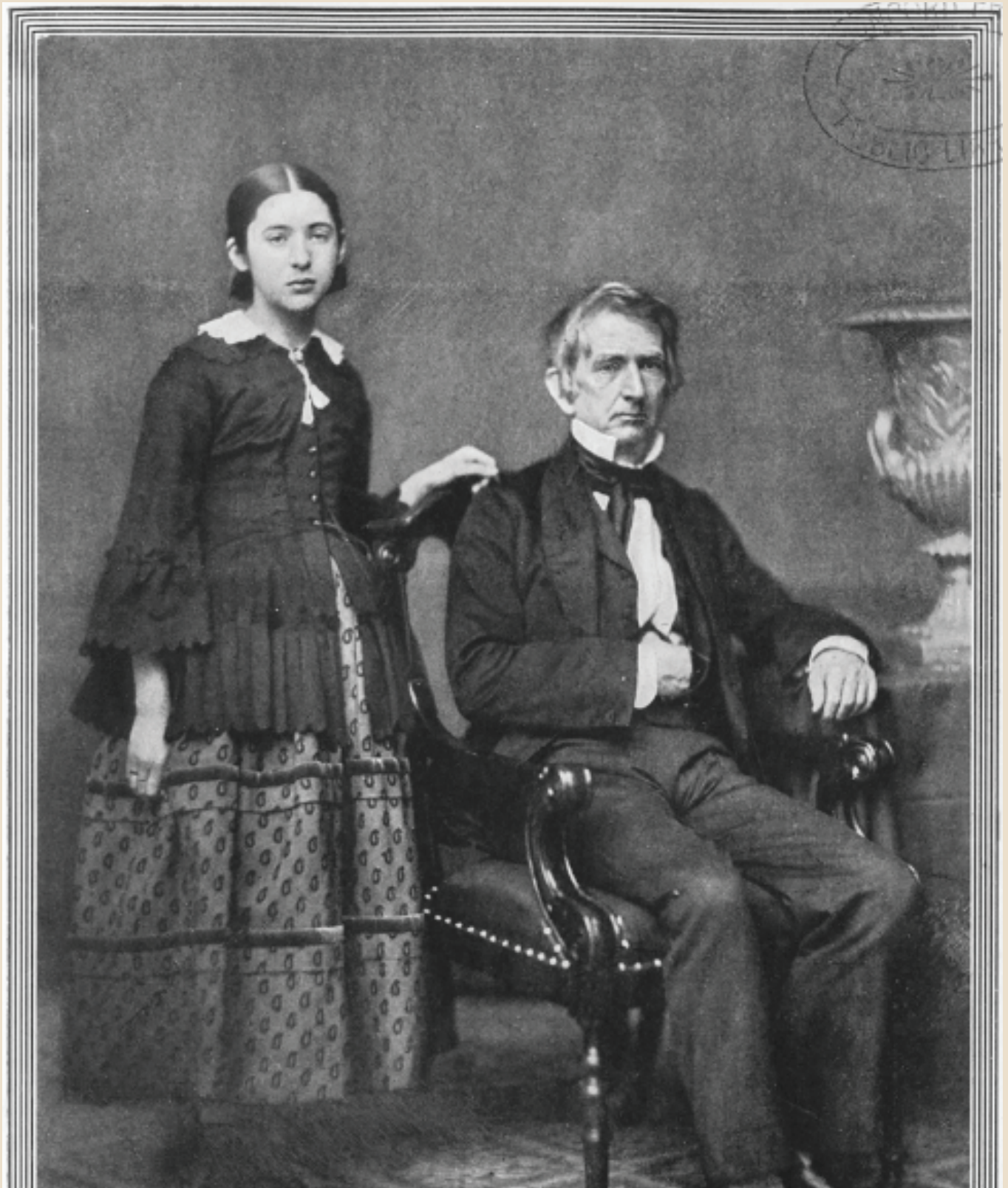


Fig. 9. Secretary of State William Henry Seward and his daughter Fanny, c. 1860–65, by Mathew Brady (1823?–1896)

he met with the senators and defended his secretary of state. The president's steadfast conduct won the day; the senators backed off, and Seward kept his job.

Back at work on 23 December, Seward had several important matters to attend to. Foremost among them was forwarding an extensive report from Dayton to Welles on the French Navy's shipbuilding surge.³⁸ He also needed to respond to an invitation just received to attend a dinner in New York, taking place that very evening!

So Seward quickly wrote a telegraphic reply:

GENTLEMEN: I received only at this time your kind letter of the 16th instant, inviting me to meet the sons of Orange and Sullivan [Counties] at the anniversary celebration in New York this evening. Thus far, although electricity consents to convey our thoughts, yet it...absolutely refuses to go into competition with steam in carrying either passengers or freight—of course I cannot come...³⁹

Seward then closed his letter by noting that if men are forced into a war, they must fight it "with vigor," but just as importantly, "...they can and must unite sons of Orange with sons of Erie, sons of New York with sons of Massachusetts, sons of Missouri and sons of California—brothers in fact as they are in name—as inseparable members of the American Republic."



New Year's Day in nineteenth-century Washington was a very grand occasion. By tradition, the president and first lady hosted a reception at the White House, first for senior government officials and diplomats, then followed by the general public. While the latter was admitted, cabinet members often retired to their homes to host receptions of their own.

Seward arrived at the White House at a little past 11 o'clock that morning, with his 18-year-old daughter Fanny (fig. 9). Seward had to peel off to oversee the president's official signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. With that task completed, the first couple began receiving guests. As Fanny later recorded, "Mr + Mrs Lincoln both remembered me, and Mr L was very cordial."⁴⁰

Unfortunately, Seward and his daughter couldn't stay; they had to rush home to open their own reception. The Seward household was soon flooded with

guests, including the British and French ambassadors, as well as many other members of the diplomatic corps. Also present, recorded Fanny, were Emanuel Leutze and his son.

There also appeared to be something else quite interesting in the Seward's reception room: Leutze's second study of *Westward*. Just when the Sewards hung it there isn't clear, but as Fanny wrote less than a fortnight later, "the study of Leutze's picture...every one notices, it is the easiest thing in the world to talk, with that in the room."⁴¹

So by 1 January 1863, everything with regard to *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way*, seemingly, was in place.

Leutze's second study of it—done for Seward in the summer of 1861—was on display in the family's reception room, there for any visitor to inspect.

Leutze's actual painting of the work in the Capitol had garnered widespread publicity, and praise, including the *National Intelligencer's* declaration that "it is, beyond question, the most thoroughly *national* picture that we have."

And, as a result, thousands were flocking to the Capitol to see it, including, presumably, the many diplomats and their families who had seen the study in the Seward's home.

And what did the finished *Westward* in the Capitol show?

In the main portion (see front cover), more or less precisely what the two studies had depicted: a wagon train of settlers struggling their way up to a mountain pass to gain their first view of the western side of the Rockies. The most readily noticeable change was the addition of a settler handing an American flag to the scout standing atop the central rock.

But down below, in the lower panorama portion that depicted the entrance to San Francisco Bay, there were two changes that would have been noted by any keen observer. First, the fortification guarding the entrance to the bay—Fort Point—now featured an American flag flying from a tall pole. The message would have been obvious to anyone who thought about it: that fort was American, and so was California. Taken in conjunction with the new flag about to be planted atop the Rocky Mountains in the main portion of *Westward*, the bigger message was just as clear: all of the territory between the Rockies and the Pacific was American and would be defended.

The second change to the panorama was even

more obvious. As with the first study (but not the second done for Seward), there were sailing vessels moving about far inside the Bay, between Alcatraz Island and an unseen San Francisco behind Fort Point. But unlike either of the two studies, there was an additional vessel in the Bay, much closer to the viewer. Smoke was rising from it at an angle, and upon closer examination, it could be seen to have a funnel, paddleboxes, and three masts. It was, unquestionably, a steamship (fig. 10).

Further still, unlike the sailing vessels in the distance that seemed to be simply sailing to-and-fro within the protective safety of the forts, this steamer was not; instead, it was nearer, and heading straight at the viewer. The implication seemed to be that this steamship wasn't afraid of the viewer, but rather, was coming out of the bay as if in challenge. Logically, only one type of vessel would do such a thing, and that was a warship.

And if a careful observer inspected this steamer's masts and yards, they might possibly conclude that its rigging was very close to that of the USS *Saranac*, the

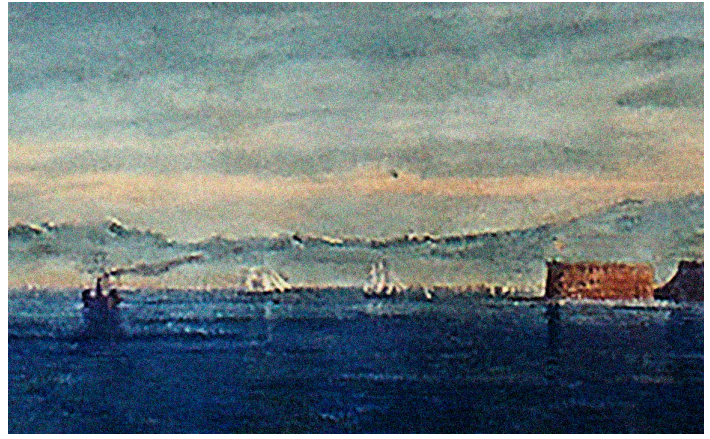


Fig. 10. Westward Ho!'s newly-added steam vessel and the newly-added American flag at Fort Point (detail, Emanuel Leutze, Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way)

only three-masted paddlebox steamer in the Pacific Squadron (fig. 11). The *Saranac* had been on the West Coast for years, and her paddleboxes made her readily

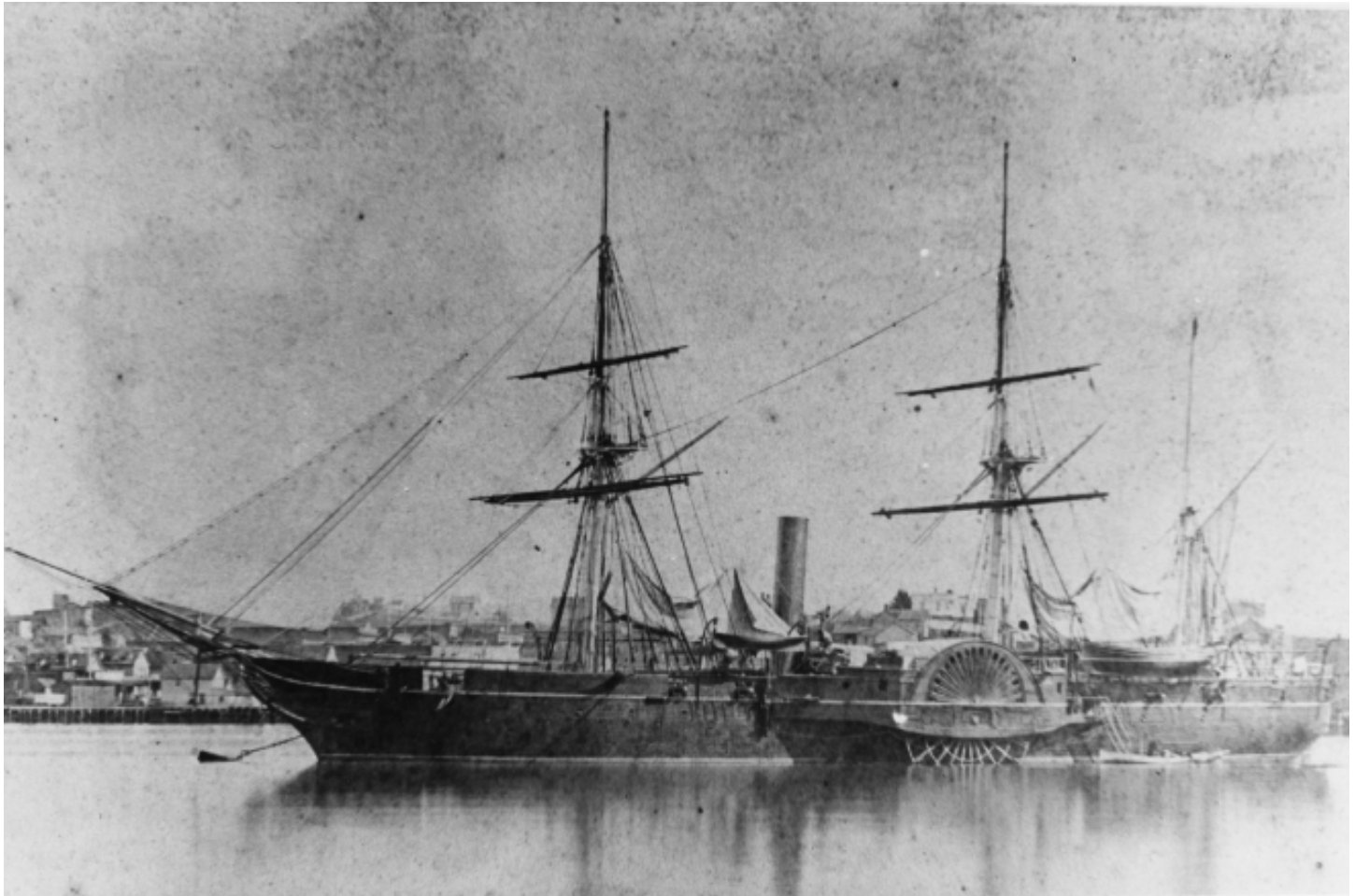


Fig. 11. The USS Saranac was part of the U.S. Navy's Pacific Squadron during the Civil War; here it is shown during the 1870s, moored in a Pacific Coast harbor.

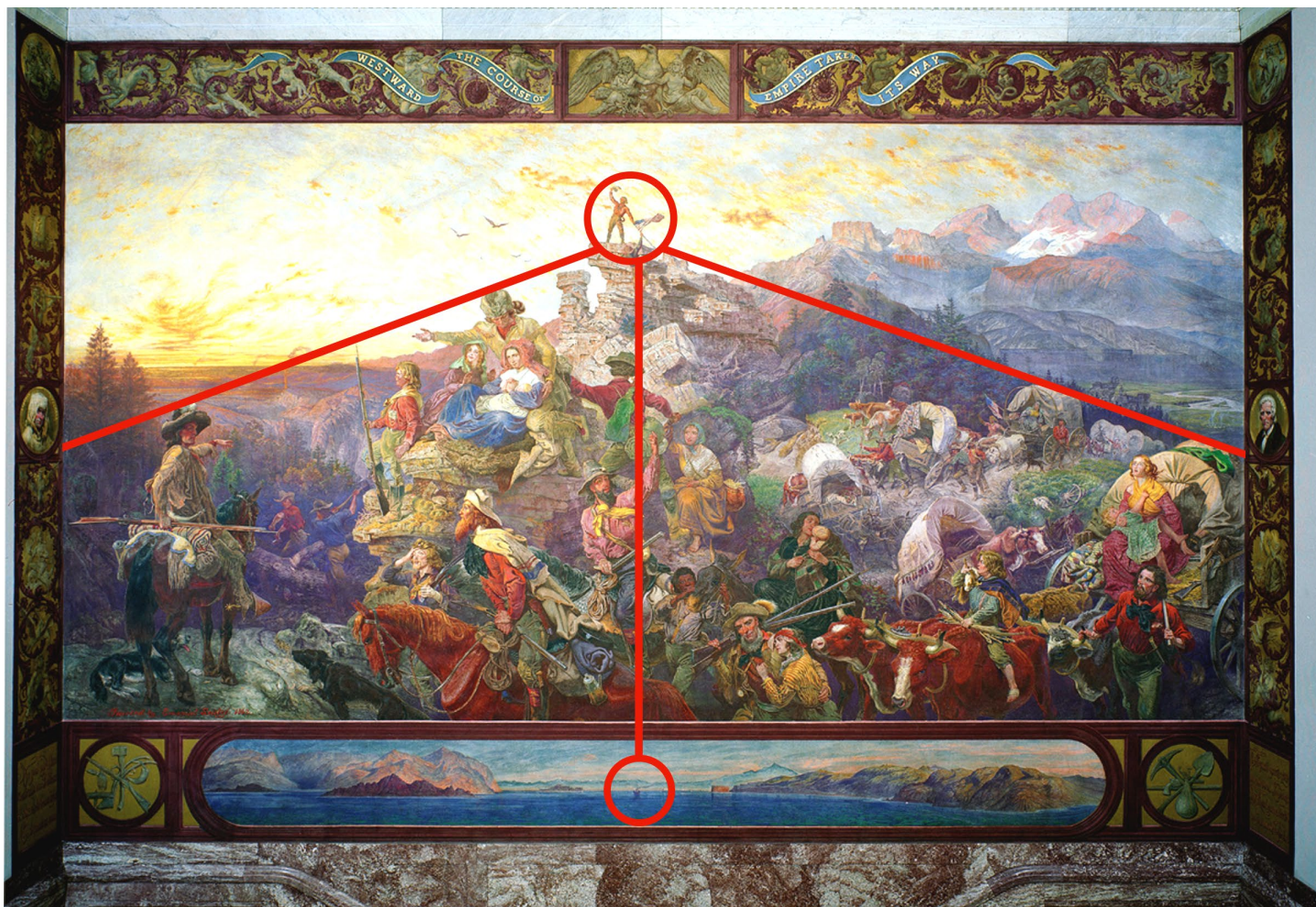


Fig. 12. *Symmetry by design: Leutze appears to have deliberately depicted the settlers and their wagons in the form of a rising peak, leading the viewer right up to the pinnacle, with the scout waving his hat and the settler handing him the newly-added American flag. Straight down from that flag, at the bottom of the painting, is the newly-added steamship.*

identifiable at sea, unlike the profile of more modern screw-propeller vessels in the fleet.⁴²

It was, without a doubt, a very clever depiction. Anyone looking at this addition to the panorama might conclude that it was simply a commercial steam vessel departing San Francisco. But an informed individual—such as a diplomat—could easily wonder whether this new vessel was meant to send a message above and beyond the new flags: the United States had the means to defend the entire Pacific Coast, thanks to the power of steam (fig. 12).

If there was one person who had the motive to make such a declaration, it was Seward. It was he who had fought for California's admission as a U.S. senator. It was he who had been tasked by Lincoln with thwarting any attempt to capture the Golden State. And it was he who seemed to remember California in his commu-

nications, both public and private.

Furthermore, it was Seward who had such close personal ties to Leutze, a friendship that would continue as the artist painted additional portraits of the Seward family in the years to come.⁴³

There was perhaps no better evidence of Seward's ongoing state of mind than the communication he wrote to Dayton in early February 1863, as the French continued to commit more ships and soldiers to their Mexican adventure:

It is a great mistake that European Statesmen make if they suppose this people are demoralized. Whatever in the case of an insurrection the people of France or of Great Britain... would do to save their national existence,... just so much and certainly no less the people

of the United States will do, if necessary, to save, for the common benefit, the region which is bounded by the Pacific and the Atlantic Coasts...⁴⁴

William Henry Seward sought to defend the Union in every way he knew how.



For a native of—and former governor and U.S. senator for—the state of New York, who was sitting on the East Coast as he wrote this, it most certainly was odd for Seward to define his country as being “bounded by the Pacific and the Atlantic Coasts” (as opposed to the other way around). His geographic definition of the United States—just three months after the unveiling of a steam ship charging out of San Francisco Bay to challenge the viewer of Leutze’s *Westward*—made it abundantly clear that whether it was pen on paper, or paint on plaster,

JOHN LAURENCE BUSCH is an independent historian who focuses upon the interaction between humanity and technology, with a specialization in first- and early second-generation steam-powered vessels. His book, *STEAM COFFIN: Captain Moses Rogers and The Steamship Savannah Break the Barrier* (2010), has been widely reviewed by magazines and academic journals on three continents. He regularly speaks to both public and professional audiences.

NOTES

1. Milton H. Shutes, *Lincoln and California* (Stanford, CA, 1943), 47.

2. [San Francisco] *Daily Evening Bulletin*, 9 Sept. 1862; *Hartford Daily Courant*, 5 Feb. 1861.

3. Benjamin B. French Diary, 22 July 1868, French Family Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC (LOC).

4. *Detroit Free Press*, 23 March 1861; William H. Seward to Thomas Corwin, 3 June 1861, Diplomatic Instructions of the Department of State to Mexico, RG 59, National Archives, Washington, DC (NARA).

5. Ibid., Seward to Corwin; *Philadelphia Enquirer*, 16 Apr. 1862.

6. Leutze’s first study of *Westward* is at the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa, OK. For his panorama of San Francisco Bay, the artist appears to have used as a model the engraved “View of the Entrance to San Francisco Bay” in the lower left corner of the 1859 map entitled *Entrance to San Francisco Bay*, which was part of the U.S. Coastal Survey. See Map Dr. 93-20, Fortifications Map File, RG 77-b, NARA.

7. French Diary, 22 July 1868.

8. *New York Daily Tribune*, 16 June 1861. Leutze’s second study is at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC.

9. Thomas Dryer to William H. Seward, 5 Sept. 1861, Dispatches from U.S. Ministers in

Hawaii, RG 59, NARA.

10. See Dryer to Seward, 6 Nov. 1861, *ibid*.

11. Seward to Gideon Welles, 31 Oct 1861, Letters Received from President of the U.S. & Executive Agencies (E-44), RG 45, NARA.

12. *Sacramento Daily Union*, 17 Jan. 1862.

13. Carl Schurz to Seward, 15 Oct. 1861, Dispatches from U.S. Minister to Spain; Dayton to Seward, 16 Oct. 1861, Dispatches from U.S. Minister to France, RG 59.

14. Seward to William Dayton, 4 Nov. 1861, Diplomatic Instructions—France, RG 59, NARA.

15. *New York Daily Tribune*, 12 Nov. 1861 (correspondent’s letter is dated 31 Oct. 1861).

16. *New York Daily Tribune*, 3 Feb. 1862; M. M. McAllen, *Maximilian and Carlota: Europe’s Last Empire in Mexico* (San Antonio, TX, 2014), 60.

17. *New York Times*, 26 Jan. 1862; *Detroit Free Press*, 29 Jan. 1862.

18. *Sacramento Daily Union*, 17 Jan. 1862.

19. *The* [Washington, DC] *Evening Star*, 3 Jan. 1862.

20. Ibid., 22 Feb. 1862.

21. *Chicago Tribune*, 28 Dec. 1861.

22. *San Francisco Bulletin*, 26 Feb. 1862.

23. Leland Stanford to Seward, 25 Mar. 1862, Governor’s Office Records—Letterbooks, California State Archives, Sacramento.

24. Seward to Dayton, 3 Mar. 1862, Diplomatic

Instructions—France, RG 59, NARA.

25. Seward to Dayton, 31 Mar. 1862, *ibid.*

26. Dayton to Seward, 22 Apr. 1862, Dispatches from U.S. Minister to France, RG 59, NARA.

27. See, for example, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 16 April 1862.

28. *The [Baltimore] Sun*, 2 July 1862 (summarized quote); see *Congressional Globe*, Senate, 37th Cong., 2nd sess., 3047 for precise statement.

29. *New York Daily Tribune*, 25 Aug. 1862. The French/Sonoran rumors continued; see *Detroit Free Press*, 6 Dec. 1862.

30. *New York Daily Tribune*, 18 Oct. 1862.

31. “Leutze” entry, 10 Oct. 1862, Index to Letters Sent (E-24), RG 80; also see 9 Oct. 1862, Register of Letters Sent (E-6), RG 45, and 10 Oct. 1862, Registers of Letters Received (E-32), RG 45, all in NARA.

32. *The [Baltimore] Sun*, 27 Nov. 1862.

33. *Ibid.*, 3 and 18 Dec. 1862.

34. [Washington DC] *Daily National Intelligencer*, 27 Nov. 1862.

35. Seward to Welles, 29 Nov. 1862, Letters Received, (E-44), RG 45, NARA.

36. *Alexandria [Virginia] Gazette*, 1 Jan. 1863, quoting a *New York Post* story.

37. Edward Bates Diary, 20 Dec. 1862, Bates Papers, LOC.

38. Seward to Welles, 23 Dec. 1862, Letters Received, (E-44), RG 45, NARA.

39. *Chicago Tribune*, 30 Dec. 1862; this letter was widely published in the press.

40. Fanny Seward Diary, 1 Jan. 1863, William H. Seward Papers, University of Rochester Special Collections, Rochester, NY. At a later meeting, Fanny recorded Leutze’s personal advice to her with regard to the Capitol’s *Westward*: “he begged me never to look at it except upon a bright, sunny day, the light of which he thought indispensable” (*ibid.*, 19 Jan. 1863). The House and Senate gallery staircases originally featured skylights, which supplied ample natural light; they were subsequently covered for maintenance reasons.

41. *Ibid.*, 14 Jan. 1863.

42. *New York Daily Tribune*, 18 Oct. 1862; Paul H. Silverstone, *Civil War Navies* (New York, 2006), 14; USS *Saranac* photos #NH43997 and #NH76112, Naval History and Heritage Command, Washington, DC.

43. Leutze subsequently painted the portraits of Fanny and Anna Seward, designed the tombstones of Frances and Fanny Seward, and painted a depiction of William Seward negotiating the purchase of Alaska. See F.W. Seward to Leutze, 14 Nov. 1866 and 14 Mar. 1867, Leutze Papers, LOC.

44. Seward to Dayton, 6 Feb. 1863, Volume 8, Correspondence—State Dept., Seward Papers, University of Rochester Special Collections, Rochester, NY.

IMAGE CREDITS:

Fig. 1. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, [LC-USZ62-31600]

Fig. 2. Detail, Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division

Fig. 3. Detail, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, [LC-DIG-ppms-ca-26583]

Fig. 4. Detail from [Artists’ portraits from Henry Tuckerman’s Book of the Artists...] [graphic] / [George Rockwood and Napoleon Sarony], [ca. 1865]-1867. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Fig. 5. Smithsonian American Art Museum, bequest of Sara Carr Upton

Fig. 6. Civil war photographs, 1861–1865, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, [LC-DIG-cwpb-04842]

Fig. 7. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, [LC-DIG-stereo-1s07910]

Fig. 8. U.S. Senate Historical Office

Fig. 9. War Department records, Brady National Photographic Art Gallery (Washington, DC), U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (identifier: 528357)

Fig. 10. Architect of the Capitol

Fig. 11. NH 43997, U.S. Naval History & Heritage Command

Fig. 12. Photo illustration, USCHS; painting, Architect of the Capitol