Nicholas C. Lowe

Listening to the Aural Heritage of John Banvard's Mississippi Panoramas: Reflections on Content and an Initial Speculative Re-Enactment

Abstract: John Banvard (American, 1815–1891) is understood to have been amongst the most influential performance entrepreneurs of the mid-nineteenth century. His most celebrated work, *The Panorama of The Mississippi River* (circa 1847) in its various iterations depicted the Mississippi, the Ohio, and the Missouri rivers. Moving panorama paintings were a form of theatrical entertainment, viewed by audiences as a latterly scrolled series of passing scenes. Presented by Banvard himself as the creator and protagonist of a simulated river boat journey, his entertaining and dramatic narrative delivery was accompanied by musical performances, while the painting was enlivened with specialized stage effects and lighting. Press from the 1840s and 50s, enthusiastically reported that watching these performances accurately mimicked the experience of river boat travel itself. The levels of realism achieved in the live event has continued to receive tacit acceptance by scholars well into the mid-twentieth century and after, who largely paid closer attention to the mechanics and material detail of mid-nineteenth-century moving panoramas. From the vantage point of the early twenty-first century, a time that is additionally replete with many new digital media formats, a return to the study of nineteenth-century immersive entertainment media is timely.

Amongst the available range of archival materials there are four published musical scores, for voice and piano, that point to a range of narrative and sensory qualities in Banvard's performances. The idea of a speculative re-enactment is offered here as an approach to viewing and investigating Banvard's work for its sensory details. To be studied, music must be performed. The occasion of the 32nd International Panorama Council in Iowa City (September 2023) made it possible to explore the music in performance, in a presentation that was part lecture, part recital, part moving image display. The intention in this paper is to begin a re-examination of the archival records to better understand the context and nature of the mid-Victorian experience of Banvard's performance.

Keywords: Panorama, Mississippi river, piano music, performance, heritage

Nicholas C. Lowe, Panoramic and Immersive Media Studies Yearbook, Germany; Outreach Committee, International Panorama Council, Switzerland; John H. Bryan Chair of Historic Preservation, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, USA

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https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111335575-005

> Banvard's Panorama has been nightly filled this past week. Every one should see this beautiful painting, before it is removed from the city. —John Banvard and Family Papers, Scrapbook

> As the curtain rises and the painting begins to move, the visitor has only to imagine himself on board of the swiftest steamers, passing on towards New Orleans, and he can enjoy a life–like and pleasing view of all the interesting scenery, towns, islands, boats, &c.&.c —John Banvard and Family Papers, Scrapbook

> Like modern movies, panoramas provided for the hordes who saw them vicarious experiences of travel and adventure. —Bertha L. Heilbron, 1936[1]

1 John Banvard, Moving Panoramas and the Mississippi River

John Banvard's *Panorama of The Mississippi River* is generally understood to have been one of the most influential performative experiences of its time, and yet so many aspects of it as a multi–sensory encounter remain elusive. The extant scholarship on Banvard's work has grown through observations drawn from news print sources, from playbills and from Banvard's many self–published panorama souvenir pamphlets. Information about the dates and locations of each performance can be drawn together by aligning details in Banvard's own journal with a 75-page scrapbook of press clippings, apparently made by the artist in the mid 1850s. The scrapbook and diary are housed at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul, Minnesota. *(John Banvard and Family Papers 1840s–1850s).*

There were a number of panoramas featuring the Mississippi River aside from Banvard's, and they are discussed at length principally by Bertha Heilbron (1936, 1949, 1967) and John F. McDermott (1949, 1958). Heilbron and McDermott's scholarship is invaluable for tracing the array of secondary sources, articles, papers, and books on the histories of Panoramas featuring the Mississippi River. Subsequent authors who reference Banvard have tended to repeat the details as they are set out by Heilbron and McDermott. Much of the subsequent writing, while marveling at the scope and scale in the achievements of Banvard and other panorama impresarios, doesn't explore too deeply their effects and the experiences of viewing. As much can be said though of Banvard's contemporaries, journalism of the 1840s and '50s tended to be hyperbolic. Banvard's own boosterish tones made claims to scale including "Three Miles of Canvas" and "The Largest Picture Ever Executed by Man." Claims of this nature around moving panoramas and other mass media entertainments in the 1800s

1 Between 1919 and 1960, Bertha L. Heilbron (1895–1972) was on the staff at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul, Minnesota. She made significant contributions to *Minnesota History*, the quarterly journal of the Minnesota History Society, as staff editor of the first 37 volumes.

were common, and the repetition of such assessments based on scale have contributed generally to a less developed understanding of the experience itself.

Not surprisingly, given that Banvard's "three mile painting" has long since perished, there can be almost no analysis of the painting at the heart of the performances. Looking for more concrete evidence of the viewing experience would demand an examination of all of the elements, including the painting with the dramatized spoken text, music, lighting, sound effects, but principally of the performance as an artifact. The responses of an audience too present a contributory unknown aspect in the making of each of the performance events. While it seems arguable to suggest that a sample of Banvard's writing may produce an impression of his narrative voice, his vocal delivery, etc., an experience of its effects is only discernible as an imaginary echo.

Performance events are like this, and like lived experiences of all kinds, performance events that cease to exist beyond their presentation can never be available for study as anything other than a lost artifact. Re-performance can offer a way to gain insights though, and amongst the range of extant archival materials are four piano manuscripts that were written as accompaniment for the panorama. Documents like these are easy to accept as residual evidence of the lost artifact of performance. Their presence compounds the idea that in any archival record, there will always be some things that are literally missing, and this is certainly the case for moving panorama performances, none of which persist in what might be understood as a complete artifact. The un-know-able and un-reproduce-able lived experiences of the performance of John Banvard's panorama itself will always be missing.

The occasion of 32nd International Panorama Council Conference, at the University of Iowa, in Iowa City, Iowa, with its relative adjacency to the Mississippi River and the river systems of the Midwest, presented itself as an opportunity to bring the music of the panorama back to its landscape. If Banvard's painting, the *Panorama of The Mississippi River,* on its "Three Miles of Canvas" can no longer be viewed, perhaps by presenting the music it might be listened to. My initial conference proposal set out to "draw upon the existing scholarship on Banvard's Mississippi Panoramas, and their related visual legacies, to re–situate Banvard's 'lost worlds' with their sonic counterparts." An initial and very tentative reconstitution of some elements of Banvard's panorama was performed on the 28th September 2023. Made possible as a collaboration with pianist Doreen Lee, and Mezzo-Soprano Élise DesChamps—both of whom are faculty at the University of Iowa School of Music—a performance was given of five of the "Mississippi Waltzes" with the song *The White Fawn of The Mississippi River.*

A narrative delivery that was as much a recital as an illustrated performance–lecture was devised to introduce the musical content. Beginning with a brief preliminary report of my research, reflecting on the sources and availability of information, my aim was to forefront the music through depicting its implied content: each of the musical scores is nominally connected to a specific place on the Mississippi River. A visually rich projected moving-image backdrop was developed through a collaboration with Jeffrey Ose Ohuaregbe, a Master of Architecture student at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Work-

ing with materials from the archival and visual records that depict the landscapes along the river, a series of digital moving image animations were produced to evoke the content of each musical piece. What follows is an initial description of some of the content, the research, and a speculative exploration of the effects of the live aural content in Banvard's panorama.

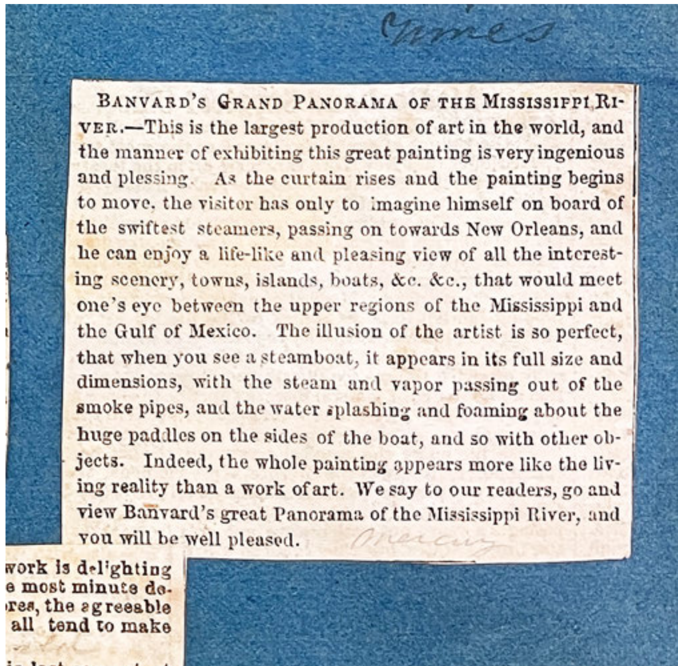
2 Mid-Nineteenth Century Purveyor of Landscape Illusions

The reputation of John Banvard's moving panorama is apparently undisputed. His *Panorama of The Mississippi River,* in all its many iterations, is understood to have been among the most influential performative experiences of its kind. Banvard's panoramas presented audiences with a narrated travelog, in the form of a simulated riverboat journey, with views of the landscapes of the Mississippi, the Missouri, and the Ohio Rivers. The qualities and vivacity of the viewing experience was reported enthusiastically in the press on both sides of the Atlantic. Life on the rivers was vividly presented in a dramatic and romantic extemporized narrative delivered by Banvard himself. Press clippings from the mid-1840s to about the mid-50s include reviews from reporters and letters from audience members who are unanimous in their praise for the effective, realistic, romantically engaging qualities in the panorama. A writer in the *Police Gazette* emphasized the scale and the value of repeat viewing: "its grandeur baffles all terms of expression . . . it must be seen; and it may be visited more than once" (*John Banvard and Family Papers*, Scrapbook, 11). A writer for the (New York?) *Mercury* (circa 1846) was just as taken in by the experience:

> The illusion of the artist is so perfect, that when you see a steamboat, it appears in its full size and dimensions, with the steam and vapor passing out of the smoke pipes, and the water splashing and foaming about the huge paddles on the sides of the boat, and so with other objects. Indeed, the whole painting appears more like the living reality than a work of art (Fig. 1) (*John Banvard and Family Papers*, Scrapbook, 9).

The press write–ups are a rich and unceasing source of such hyperbolic praise (Fig. 2). Audible throughout is the literary character in Banvard's narrative, both in his turn of phrase and his vocal delivery. These same erudite qualities echo through the many souvenir programs and pamphlets that iterate the journey in copious detail alongside Banvard's biography (McDermott 1949, 48–62).

Much is told that hinges on details in the lives of people on the river too. Everyone is in motion and so too are tons of lumber, cotton, sugar, tobacco, and livestock. People are doing business, building settlements, working their newly acquired land and defending their homesteads. There are landmarks to explore, and landscape features with native traditional significance to reflect upon. In a report from London's



BANVARD'S GRAND PANORAMA OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER.—This is the largest production of art in the world, and the manner of exhibiting this great painting is very ingenious and plessing. As the curtain rises and the painting begins to move, the visitor has only to imagine himself on board of the swiftest steamers, passing on towards New Orleans, and he can enjoy a life-like and pleasing view of all the interesting scenery, towns, islands, boats, &c. &c., that would meet one's eye between the upper regions of the Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico. The illusion of the artist is so perfect, that when you see a steamboat, it appears in its full size and dimensions, with the steam and vapor passing out of the smoke pipes, and the water splashing and foaming about the huge paddles on the sides of the boat, and so with other objects. Indeed, the whole painting appears more like the living reality than a work of art. We say to our readers, go and view Banvard's great Panorama of the Mississippi River, and you will be well pleased.

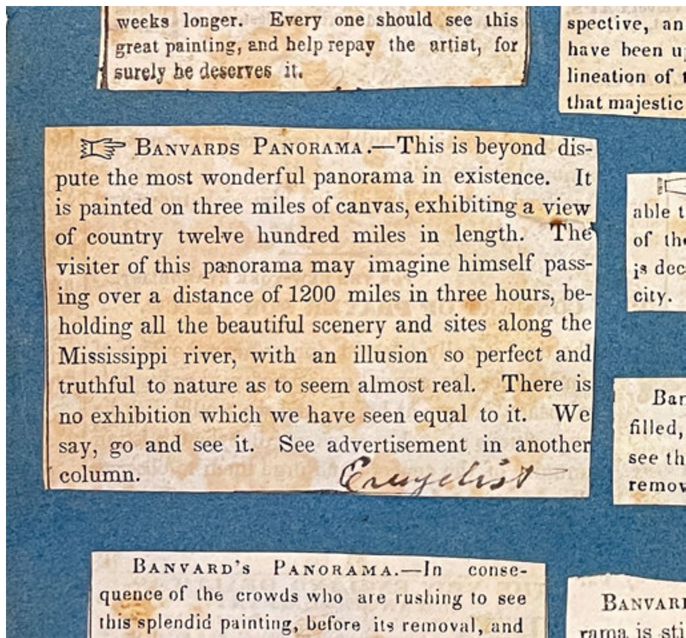
Fig. 1: Anonymous. New York Mercury, USA 1847. Banvard, John and Family Papers. 1840s–1850s. Scrapbook, p.9. Image, N. Lowe; courtesy of the Minnesota History Society, Saint Paul, Minnesota.

Egyptian Hall in 1848, with an illustrated "view . . . taken from Banvard's great Panorama" (*John Banvard and Family Papers*, Scrapbook, 12. 1848.) is a narrative comparing Banvard's representation with the landscape as it might have been seen by Louis Phillippe, the Duke of Orleans[2] in 1796. Traveling from Philadelphia to New Orleans along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers,

> What a change he would behold! Instead of endless forests, he [Louis Phillipe] would see beautiful plantations; instead of the rude dwellings of Indians, he would behold noble cities; and where the impenetrable canebreaks existed, he would find numerous towns and villages. Where he heard only the cry of the wolf and the howl of the panther, he would now hear the song of the husbandman, and the busy hum of civilization. (*John Banvard and Family Papers*, Scrapbook, 12.)

The point is amply made about the panorama as a "work of art" and therefore by implication, as an image of civilization. There are narrations of notorious and news-worthy

2 Exiled from France in 1793, Louis Phillippe III, the Duke of Chartres (1773–1850), had settled in Philadelphia in 1797. He traveled on the Mississippi in the late 1790s. Banvard's inclusion of Louis Phillippe's narrative in the panorama in London in 1848 appears to be related to the protection given to Louis Phillippe by Queen Victoria, who housed him until his demise in 1850 at Clairmont, an estate in Surrey, England.



weeks longer. Every one should see this great painting, and help repay the artist, for surely he deserves it.

BANVARDS PANORAMA.—This is beyond dispute the most wonderful panorama in existence. It is painted on three miles of canvas, exhibiting a view of country twelve hundred miles in length. The visiter of this panorama may imagine himself passing over a distance of 1200 miles in three hours, beholding all the beautiful scenery and sites along the Mississippi river, with an illusion so perfect and truthful to nature as to seem almost real. There is no exhibition which we have seen equal to it. We say, go and see it. See advertisement in another column.

BANVARD'S PANORAMA.—In consequence of the crowds who are rushing to see this splendid painting, before its removal, and

Fig. 2: Anonymous. *The Essayist*, USA 1847. Banvard, John and Family Papers. 1840s-1850s. Scrapbook, p.4. Image, N. Lowe; courtesy of the Minnesota History Society, Saint Paul, Minnesota.

events, such as riverboat accidents, shipwrecks and horrific steamboat boiler explosions. There are robbers, and hard-bitten boatmen, rubbing shoulders with finely dressed ladies and enslaved laborers. The French, the English and a good many "new" Americans encounter each other. The locations sail into view as a sequence of revelations, characterized by their sequential panoramic narrative flow which becomes synonymous with the presence and persistence of the flowing rivers themselves.

All these descriptions, anecdotes and poetic narratives are interwoven, and there is a distinct iterative romantic quality. This landscape is presented as a living entity, and its lived experiences are entwined with Banvard's own story, which he tells with authority and a keen linguistic dexterity, as its authentic interlocutor. An issue of the New York *Tribune* in 1847 offers the following comments: "The racy and well-told anecdotes of Mr. Banvard are an important item of the exhibition, and their genuine humor is quite an attraction. The artist is reaping a rich reward for his great work" (*John Banvard and Family Papers*, Scrapbook, 9). In many respects the whole endeavor amounts to a robust retelling of the artist's own biography. He is presented as the protagonist and very much as a heroic artist who, through his experiences of personal loss and physical ordeals in the landscape, is in possession of unique insights and connected knowledge. His undertakings, and the means through which all of the above are made visible, are evidently understood as a confluence of elements that constitute the exhibition of his panorama.

Amongst the Banvard family papers at the Minnesota Historical Society is a small stack of fan mail. One of the most striking of these is a letter, in verse, dated 9 May 1852, from James Smith, a cabinet maker from Fife, Scotland. It begins, "Immortal Banvard, sacred is they name, awakening up an extacy [sic] of flame Of high, upheaved rapture, and delight, In all the potent spell of magic might, it's sound awakes a high and holy feeling As beauteous paintings shine, Thy worth What noble art, is there displayed to view" (*John Banvard and Family Papers,* Letter). Another letter from Robert Compton, of Liverpool (UK), dated 8 October 1849, poetically aligns the mighty Mississippi River with Banvard as a person. The Mississippi in maps and literature is often called "the Father of Waters," a name that is applied, up to the present time. Compton writes, "Sir, Excuse the liberty I take in addressing to you the following production written upon witnessing your beautiful Panorama." Compton then follows with an eight-verse poem which opens with the stanza, "Father of Rivers! We gaze upon thee" (*John Banvard and Family Papers*, Letter). In this allusion Compton deifies Banvard, conflating him, as author and presenter of the panorama, with being the maker or father of the river and its landscape. Evidently gazing upon Banvard in the theater is akin for Compton with gazing upon the "Father of Rivers." In all likelihood Compton's sole encounter with the Mississippi River was through having seen it in the panorama, his only points of reference being the combined effects of Banvard's performance (the painting, Banvard's vocal delivery, music and sound effects, lighting etc.). John Banvard is situated here as if he were the actual father of the river, as well as the medium of its nature, through the power of his work as an artist.

Another stream of poetic adoration appears as a press clipping in the Banvard Scrapbook from Mrs. T. P. Smith of Woodvale, Roxbury, Massachusetts.[3] Again, Banvard is described as having godlike powers. Her title and opening lines alone offer enough of a glimpse of the whole:

> *Tributary Lines, On seeing Banvard's Panorama of the Mississippi River.*
> Painting, thou wondrous, glorious art!
> Thine, painter, a transcendent, lofty part—
> Omnipotent, our memory to aid—
> Omniscient, —through all distance thou dost lead, [. . .]
> (*John Banvard and Family Papers*, Scrapbook, 8.)

The epic tone continues in a further endorsement of Banvard, in a poem by a better known poet, William Wallace (1819–1881). A fellow artist and peer, he perhaps more realistically pegs Banvard as an instrument of the "God of Nature." Included amongst

3 A person who appears to be the same Mrs. Eliza T.P. Smith receives comment in volume 46 of the diary of John Quincy Adams. In the entry for "Wednesday 28. October 1846," Quincy Adams suggests Mrs. Smith is the producer of a Miscellany. John Quincy Adams Digital Diary, Massachusetts Historical Society, accessed December 1, 2023, https://www.masshist.org/publications/jqadiaries/index.php/document/jqadiaries–v46–1846–10–28–p053/dual.

an additional sheaf of press clippings, under the title, *To Banvard, After Visiting his Great Panorama of the Mississippi River*, Wallace writes,

> Brave Artist! It is thine to show
> With what a liberal hand
> The mighty God of Nature strewed
> The Glorious of our land!
> The bright, the dark in harmony –
> The Beautiful—The Grand:
> Let him who found no shrine before
> Come hither and he must adore.
> (*John Banvard and Family Papers*,
> press clipping.)

In the closing verse, with much the same approach, Banvard is situated as a skillful conduit of nature rather than as its author:

> Brave artist whose conceptions teem
> With river, cloud and fell—
> O! painter of the noblest Stream
> That cleaves the Earth! Tis well
> Thy Pencil chose no fleeting glance
> Of ladye-love or fairy-dance,
> But nature's grandest dream:
> And Europe in thy work shall see
> What God created for the FREE!
> (*John Banvard and Family Papers*,
> press clipping.)

The last two lines re-situate Banvard in his American context, with a reminder of transatlantic cultural and historic political rivalry.

3 Immersive Experience

Many reports have described feelings of having been actually transported by the experience of viewing, and allusions of this kind are common with other moving panoramas too. Based on the extant archival record of Banvard's work, his panorama, for its technical dexterity, appears to have been a field leader. For those who had seen the landscape for themselves, the accuracy and realism of what was being presented is never questioned; on the contrary it is, "correct and faithful to nature" (Moorhead 1847). And the detail in the passing scenes for those who had not traveled along the river was evidently as affecting as actually seeing it might be:

> As an elaborate series of pictures, well drawn and well coloured from nature, presenting all the varied and (to European eyes) novel features of 4000 miles of American scenery—broad and rapid rivers, stupendous rocks, deep and variegated forests, thickly inhabited towns, isolated villages, richly cultivated corn fields, sugar and cotton plantations, intermixed with scenes of American life, savage civilized, —the panorama affords vast delight to all spectators (*John Banvard and Family Papers*, Scrapbook, 32).

A panoramic image of a riverbank might evoke a real experience of a passing landscape, as seen from an actual boat on the river. Reviews in the New York Sunday newspapers *The Atlas* and the *Mercury* readily make these connections. "As the curtain rises and the painting begins to move, the visitor has only to imagine himself on board of the swiftest steamers, passing on towards New Orleans, and he can enjoy a life–like and pleasing view of all the interesting scenery, towns, islands, boats, &c. &c." (*John Banvard and Family Papers*, Scrapbook, 9). The same review concludes, "Indeed, the whole painting appears more like the living reality than a work of art" (*John Banvard and Family Papers*, Scrapbook, 9). An immersive effect can be felt easily with a controlled view of lateral motion. Anyone who has experienced such a sensation of movement when sitting on a train will know the feeling that occurs when the train next to yours starts to move; it can feel like your own actual movement, even though everything else tells you, you are not moving. But what of the other elements in the production? What of the interweaving of the effects of sound, music and light, in the experience?

To some degree the image qualities can be assessed from a few examples of Banvard's work that remain, notably, two small landscape paintings by Banvard belong to the collection of the Codington County Heritage Museum in Watertown, South Dakota. An anticipation of the lighting and light effects may be drawn from knowledge of the sophisticated light techniques that were commonly applied in mid-Victorian theater. Panorama showmen, like Banvard, are typically understood to have been skilled in theatrical production methods. Many, including Banvard, worked as carpenters and scene painters in the theater, and some were adept museum display builders too. The historical ancestor of moving panoramas is generally cited as emanating from exactly this combination of theater and museum production skills. Philippe James De Loutherbourg's Eidophusikon was a kind of tableaux–vivant staging of landscape views. De Loutherbourg, (French-born British, 1740–1812) dissatisfied with the limits of scenic design for the theater through searching for a more expressive and experimental form of entertainment, developed the Eidophusikon (Huhtamo 2012, 93–112; Angelo 1828, 247–250).

Banvard grew up with a background in self–taught entertainment and entrepreneurship, and it is likely he knew of moving dioramas, alongside other handheld scroll images which were commonly available for home entertainment as toy-like objects throughout the early to mid–nineteenth century and after. Banvard, like De Loutherbourg, would have been familiar in his own time with a range of magic tricks and entertainment media that utilized light and lenses, equipment like magic lanterns, or toy theatres and manual shadow making. It is likely too that each discovered their

innovations by creatively responding to the range of diorama-like presentation media in their midst.

A letter pressed handbill in the Banvard family files at the Minnesota Historical Society appears to have been printed by John Banvard as a child. The range of performance types that are listed seems ambitious and yet aspirational. But this document shows him as being evidently in possession of a developed media skillset and of the combined capacity to project himself as a producer, a performer and a promoter (Fig. 3). Understanding the business of showmanship appears to have saved his life on a number of occasions. The threat of poverty following the death of his father when he was 14 drove Banvard to leave Boston and head west along the Ohio River in search of a living. His biographers describe how, with endless spirit and resourcefulness and the assistance of a close group of fellow artists he'd met in New Harmony, Indiana, he constructed dioramas, which ran for public viewing on a raft down the river. (Lovett 1847, 145–48) With varying success and many failures, he eventually made his first Mississippi Panorama in the years leading up to 1847 and slowly made a success of it.

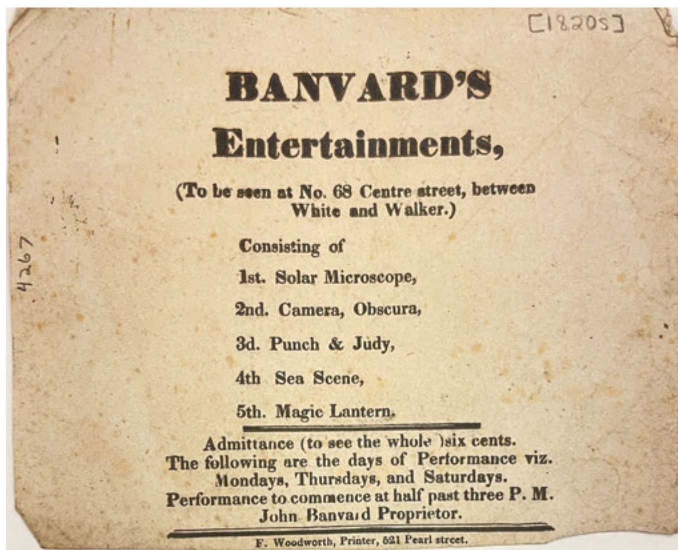


Fig. 3: John Banvard, (1815–1891) Handbill. printed by John Banvard. Banvard, John and Family Papers. 1840s–1850s. Image, N. Lowe; courtesy of the Minnesota History Society, Saint Paul, Minnesota.

4 The Panorama and its Enduring Echoes

While not necessarily the inventor of the moving panorama, in 1848 John Banvard was certainly amongst the first to have presented a well-functioning moving panorama mechanism. (*Scientific American* 1848, 100). There were many imitators besides, and other showmen exhibiting related attractions, all vying for a share of what was evidently a robust and lucrative market. The managers of such attractions, to keep audiences coming back, were in the business of constantly updating and adding new features and new scenes. The fierce competition undoubtedly played a role in the descriptive hyperbole that pervades the printed records. Banvard claims to have been the exhibitor of "Three Miles of Canvas," and by extension, the author of "the largest picture ever executed by man." The claims of a monumental scale are as often repeated as they are disputed,[4] and it is important to note that while none of John Banvard's painted panoramas have survived, other examples have. Moving panoramas were typically painted on lightweight cotton fabrics, usually a plain–woven light calico type cloth. The surviving examples confirm their relative material fragility. Moving panoramas are essentially a performing scenic object that, like other elements in the service of theatrical performance, was seen only as a component part of a production, rather than as a main artifact. As a piece of painted scenery, a panorama had to withstand being repeatedly rolled and unrolled, being transported and exposed to environmental changes, both damp and heat. Regular repair and replacement were expected of any such item in a theatrical performance. The general material conditions are well understood through the conservation and study of the few surviving examples.[5]

An accepted understanding of moving panorama histories then has largely been established through the remaining trail of ephemeral printed materials that made it into the archives. Coupled with the panorama paintings that remain in museums and a few experimental reconstructions, the material qualities can be accurately described. But a fuller appreciation of the moving panorama for its effects, what its performative instances are understood to have been, is an ongoing exploration that demands performative methods. But as already stated performance events can defy capture through traditional academic methods that focus on material evidence rather than conjecture. With performative media there is always going to be something missing, beyond the event, incomplete, rather like a jigsaw with missing pieces.

4 For an extensive bibliography of panorama scholarship, surveys and sources, see Hyde, n.d. See also Hyde 1988; Huhtamo 2013; McDermott 1958; and Rathbone 1950.

5 There are three panoramas that can be used as a comparison to understand the size, scale and material of a moving panorama: the *Panorama of the Monumental Grandeur of the Mississippi Valley,* circa 1850, Saint Louis Art Museum (distemper on cotton muslin, 348 ft × 7.5 ft); *A Grand Panorama of a Whaling Voyage 'Round the World,* 1848, New Bedford Whaling Museum (1275 ft × 8 ft); *Scenes from the Life of Christ,* late 1870s, Krannert Art Museum, Champaign, Illinois (3 rolls of painted muslin 525 ft × 7 ft).

Locating the legibility of experience in material things is the focus of Jules David Prown's approach to material culture methods. Prown proposes that, "an artifact—a made object, whether you call it art or not—is an historical event, something that happened in the past" (Prown 1995, 2). If this is the case, then material things might retain evidence based on their experience. The marks of a production or manufacture, for example, may differ significantly between a hand-made ceramic vessel and a mass-produced mold cast plastic bottle, but the materials and the modes of production can be enlisted to tell a story of cultural, social, political and material conditions. Between situation, location, and motivation, a contextual intelligence is arguably evident. Perhaps these same markers can be legible in the residual material of a live event, especially if that evidence is understood as being existent in an ever unfolding present. Much like human experience which accrues as memory in an individual person, the experience of material objects might be understood similarly as accumulative and always in the present.

In acknowledgment of the problems of reading presence from objects, the French archeologist Laurent Olivier offers a complementary approach which reads material evidence through a network of connections. "We can look to see the connections between remains, separate the variable elements from the stable ones, and distinguish things that change from those that endure. The present, in this respect, opens onto all the pasts that have preceded present time and that are recorded in it. The archeology of the present is in fact all archeology" (Olivier 2015, 53). The idea of remains that endure beyond any individual event iterations of John Banvard's panorama seems tantalizingly like an opportunity to at least try looking for experience. Prown's thinking along with Olivier's nuanced understanding of the palimpsest might offer a way of locating meaning in the missing live material. Prown qualifies his speculative method by pointing out that "the past cannot be retrieved in its affective totality," and again it seems we have to take what we can from a reconstructed event. Which is as much to say individual instances of an event can never be repeated, and what remains is only ever going to be the echo of it (Prown,1995, 2).

Acknowledging the inherent incompleteness of archival evidence is key. Arlette Farge explores related questions through her encounter with a series of bodily traces in late medieval materials in the French National archives. Farge is emphatic when she points out how "archival documents cannot be definitive proof" (Farge, 2013,100). Instead, she places an emphasis on the importance of paying attention to the details in order to establish grounds. While not incontrovertible, things in the archives "are reference points we cannot ignore, whose meaning must be constructed through rigor and precise questioning" (Farge 2013, 100). How the performances of moving panoramas felt, what they looked like, how their enduring popularity was sustained is a conjecture based upon ephemera. But the extant evidence unquestionably says that something happened that was effective in its moment. Banvard's panorama views can only be reconstructed in a speculative manner. The idea of performance as a fragile artifact can sit comfortably with the possibility of its reconstruction, pro-

vided that an audience can accept that our contemporary sense of the media is always unique. We can guess at the possibilities, but the unique experience that so moved Mrs. T. P. Smith to write poetry for John Banvard is as unknowable as the performance itself.

John Banvard's capacities in performance are attributed in large part to his animated vocal delivery, through which he delivered a richly developed text that was praised for its poetry, its humor and its charm. In these regards the archives are rich with materials that appear to carry his voice. The written language in panorama brochures and 1840s–50s news media can be interpreted imaginatively, performed as vocal text. The news–print reports provide a lively language of contexts, and Banvard's style of narrative delivery and certain qualities of his vocal performance are arguably discernable. Reading aloud from the self–published pamphlet texts might be a stand–in for being in a theater and listening to John Banvard in the late 1840s.

5 Life on the Mississippi and Mark Twain

Continuing in a spirit of pure speculation, it is interesting to encounter a description of panorama narration in Mark Twain's memoir, Life on The Mississippi (Twain 1961. Pen name of Samuel Langhorne Clemens, 1835–1910). In chapter 59, "Legends and Scenery," Twain describes an encounter, while traveling on the river north of La Crosse, Wisconsin, in the direction of St Paul. He brings to life the vocal presence of a fellow passenger who, unprompted, offers a very skillful extemporized narration of the passing scenery. Twain evidently knows of him and offers us his admiration. It is certainly an accolade to be presented by Mark Twain in this way, who is at the very least an equal in such loquacious capacity. The speaker's vocal ease is much praised and Twain gives him his due and distinguishes him as a learned master of his craft, "tripping along his theme with such nimble and confident ease, slamming in a three–ton word, here and there, with such a complacent air" (Twain 1961, 313–17).

In the course of Twain's own fluent extemporaneous literary style, the speaker's professional identity is tantalizingly revealed, but not his name. "Have you ever traveled with a panorama?" asks Twain. "I have formally served in that capacity," replies the speaker (Twain 1961, 315). While no name is given to identify the traveler, there are other clues to who this might be. His senior age is hinted at and there is a brief description of his shorter stature and his demeanor. In the early 1880s, it seems right that Twain would mention a "panorama man." Perhaps Twain's conceit alludes to this actually being John Banvard. Following a personal financial disaster, Banvard had moved to Watertown, South Dakota to live with his son Eugene in 1880. There is some additional evidence to suggest that he may have traveled between the East Coast and Watertown a number of times during that period.

Mark Twain's account could of course also be a total fiction that he included in this memoir of his life on the Mississippi as a device for speaking about moving panoramas and their important connection to narrative traditions of the Mississippi River. If Mark Twain were to allude to another panorama maker of significance at that time in that region it would almost certainly be either Henry Lewis (British-born American, 1819–1904) or John Banvard. Though at this time in the 1880s Lewis had become a resident in Dusseldorf Germany, reorienting his career in 1853 intentionally to elevate his profile as a higher-class artist via the production of a set of fine prints based on his views of the Mississippi River. He served as a consular agent for the United States between 1867 and 1864, an accolade that Twain is very likely to have mentioned if this was Lewis. The inclusion of the encounter is certainly also an opportunity for Twain to align himself as a writer and raconteur with the grandeur of the panorama and its emergence as a significant American art form. In clear admiration, Mark Twain mentions Banvard by name elsewhere in his papers as an act to be followed (Twain, 1855).

6 Listening Through the Archive: *The Mississippi Waltzes* and *The White Fawn*

Amongst the materials in the archive at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul, Minnesota, are two pieces of sheet music. The first is titled *The Mississippi Waltzes—Played During the Moving of Banvard's Three Mile Picture*, written by Thomas Bricher and published in Boston in 1847 (Fig. 4) (Bricher 1847). The second sheet music text is called *The White Fawn of the Mississippi River—From Banvard's Great Picture of the Mississippi Now Exhibiting at the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly* and was published in London in 1848 (Fig. 5) (Schwieso and Banvard 1848). When thinking about the musical elements in moving panorama performances, a comparison must be drawn with cinematic viewing experiences. An idea posited by Bertha Heilbron in her 1949 essay "Documentary Panorama" offers a direct analogy for panorama as a kind of proto–cinema (Heilbron 1936; Lewis 1967; Heilbron 1949). The ways in which moving panorama can be understood as an anticipation of cinema is further developed by John Francis McDermott, when he refers to panoramic forms as "Newsreel—old style." He writes, "The newsreel, or travelog, then is no invention of the twentieth century. It is now more than one hundred and fifty years old" (McDermott 1958; Rathbone 1950). The aural content, when skillfully integrated into film, is well studied as a significant carrier of emotional narrative details. On this basis then it might be appropriate to think of Banvard's panorama as a kind of moving image theater, and to consider the combined effects of the music with the moving painting as an anticipation of cinematic experience.

A close reading of *The Mississippi Waltzes* immediately suggests specific content, as it might have appeared in the panorama painting. The time signatures of each can

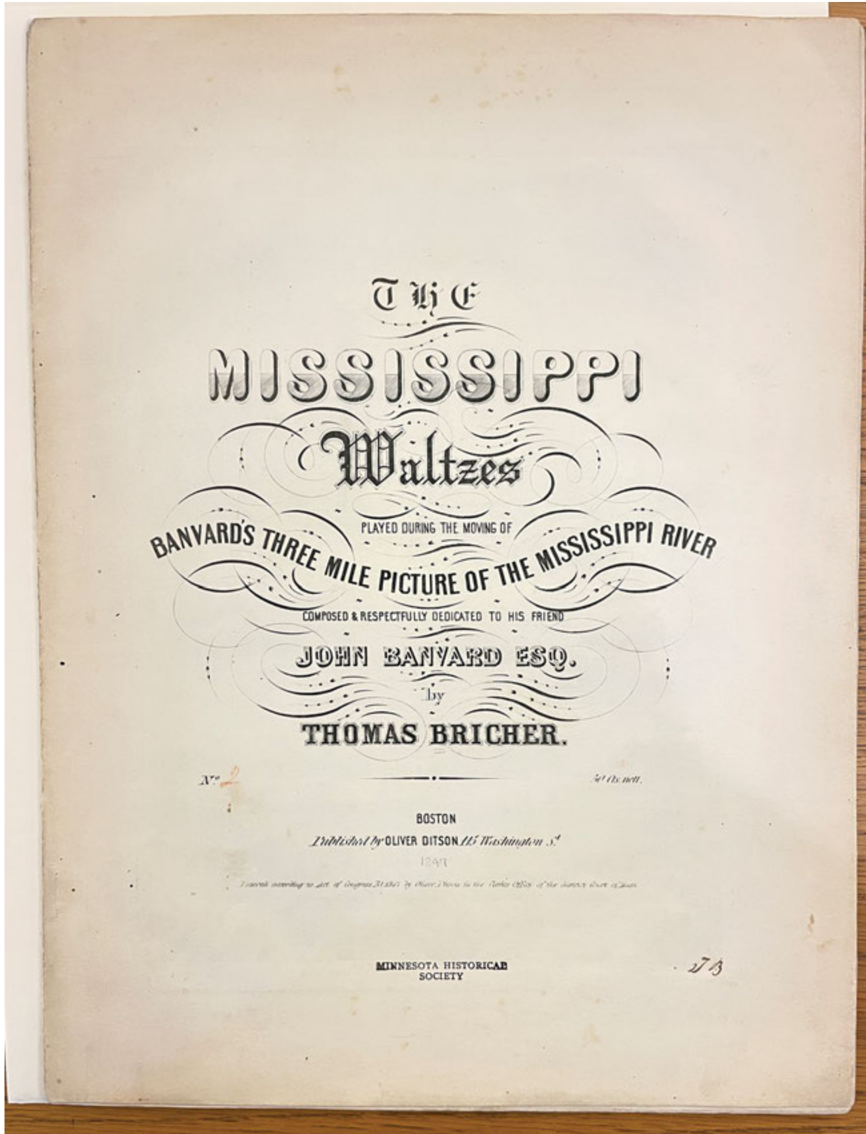


Fig. 4: Thomas Bricher (American, active 1840s). *The Mississippi Waltzes*, 1847. Cover, sheet music. Includes the following musical compositions: Iowa Waltz; Peytonia Waltz; Bayaou Sarra Waltz; The Indian Dance; Crescent March. Image, N. Lowe; courtesy of the Minnesota History Society, Saint Paul, Minnesota.

be taken as an initial suggestion of their intended atmospheric qualities which, though not part of this discussion, can yield additional nuanced meaning when taken together with an array other notational detail. These five piano pieces are described on their cover page as waltzes, but their time signatures show they might be more

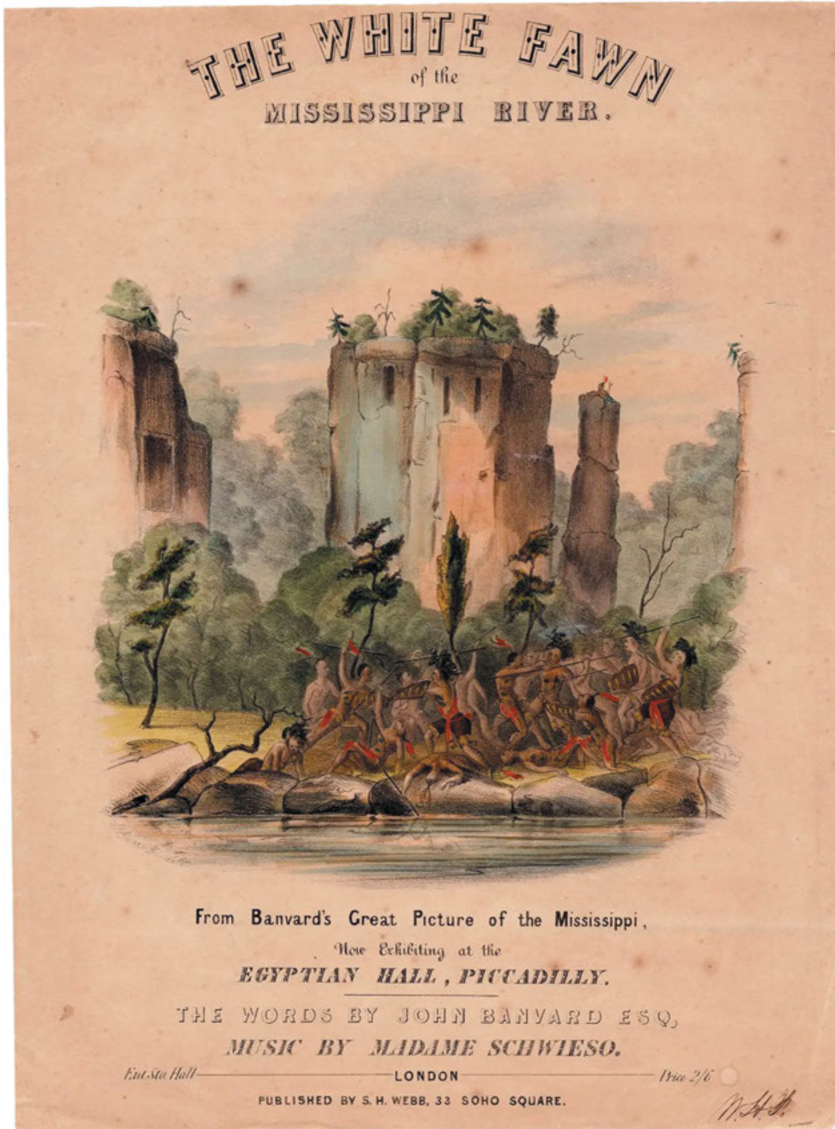


Fig. 5: *The White Fawn of the Mississippi*, 1848. Cover, sheet music. Image, James Arsenault & Company.

correctly described as three waltzes, a jig and a march. On the first inside page, the first waltz is called "Iowa Waltz" and the time signature of three–four confirms that it is indeed a waltz. Curiously though, the title is preceded with an additional heading that reads, *The Mississippi Waltzes. NO 2*. (Fig. 6) indicating that this is the second of two sheet music publications, discussed in more detail below. The second and third pieces are titled "Peytonia Waltz" and "Bayaou Sarra Waltz," both of which carry the

Fig. 6: Thomas Bricher (American, active 1840s). *The Mississippi Waltzes No. 2,* 1847. Detail showing the first inside printed page and title. Image, N. Lowe; courtesy of the Minnesota History Society, Saint Paul, Minnesota.

same "waltz" time signature of three-four. The fourth piece, called *The Indian Dance*, has a time signature of six-eight, which can be interpreted as a jig. The last piece is called *Crescent March,* and it is indeed a march, in four-four time. The *Waltzes* are written for solo pianist, whereas the song, *The White Fawn of the Mississippi River, a Setting of a Poem by John Banvard*, is for piano and soprano voice. The cover text declares that the music is written by Madame Harriet Schwieso, and she is also named as having performed the piece at the Egyptian Hall in London.

As indicated above there are additional music publications for Banvard's panorama, also written by Thomas Bricher; these can be found in the Library on Congress database. Both were published in Boston in 1847. The first bears a cover sheet that is identical to *The Mississippi Waltzes,* (referenced above) and the title of the second echoes with the song (also referenced above) as follows: *The Death of the White Fawn. A Descriptive Song Written By John Banvard Esq. Composed & Respectfully Dedicated to Miss Susan M. Richmond (of New Bedford Mass) by Thomas Bricher* (Fig. 7) (Bricher, 1847). Evidently Bricher had previously composed a setting of John Banvard's poetry; the song words in both the 1847 and 1848 documents are identical. Again the "waltzes" have indicative titles and a parallel range of time signature variations with three waltzes, a jig and a march. In the order of their appearance, the first is "Selma Waltz," followed by "The Gypsy's Dance," a jig, then two more waltzes, "The Walnut Hill Waltz," "Wood Island Waltz," and finally, in four-four time is "Rush Island March."

The places referenced when taken together with the names across all these documents, *Iowa*, *Selma, Wood Island, Rush Island*, and *Bayaou Sarra*, are all names that are either still in use or that can be found with the aid of maps dating from the 1840s. Banvard's 1847 panorama pamphlet mentions Walnut Hill in the narrative for "*VICKS-*

Fig. 7: Thomas Bricher, (American, active 1840s). *The Death of the "White Fawn,"* 1847. Image, Library of Congress, Music Division.

BURG," which he tells us is *"Situated on the Walnut Hills. These hills come in and extend along on the river for about two miles."* The *Peytonia Waltz* however is evidently named after the steamboat Peytona, and was almost certainly included to accompany its representation in the panorama. The Peytona is described in the pamphlet in relation to a location in Kentucky on the Mississippi just south of Cairo, Illinois.

> IRON BANKS, And the town of Columbus are the first objects that strike the eye of the voyager after passing the Ohio. They are introduced into the picture by moonlight, with the magnificent steamer Peytona wooding; one of the largest and fastest boats on the river, commanded by Capt. John Shallcross, a well known and gentlemanly commander of the West. (Banvard 1847)

Capt. John Shallcross is also included as an endorser of John Banvard's integrity in a number of the pamphlets before and after this edition. Alongside the other pieces of music in this publication, the last piece has the slightly more obscure name of *Crescent March*. Evidently this closing march was intended to accompany scenes of New Orleans, colloquially known, up to and including the 1850s, as the Crescent City (Banvard 1847).

There is a distinction to be drawn between the indicative uses of the different time signatures. The waltz and the march times have been applied to denote civic facilities and achievements, settlements, towns and wonders of the modern age—like the Peytona which Banvard salutes as, "one of the largest and fastest boats on the river," (Banvard 1847) whereas the two jigs are enlisted to convey less civilized, folk-based representations. The jig as a musical type is usually scored in six-eight time, and is known largely for its associations with folk and traditional music. Dancing a jig suggests a kind of freeform disorganized approach to dancing that doesn't require a partner to perform. Rather, it suggests a more vigorous physical engagement. So if the waltz speaks to organized partner dancing, and the march to an image of social order, conjuring a coordinated single unit of disciplined bodies, the jig points to a possibly drunken, wild and sweaty free for all. Of these two jigs, *The Gypsy's Dance* is perhaps representative of an older form of settler culture resonating with European folk traditions, whereas *The Indian Dance*, speaks for itself as a representation of what was perceived to indigenous wild nature.

The inclusion of indigenous histories in Banvard's panoramas is consistent with others from that time. The *Panorama of the Monumental Grandeur of the Mississippi Valley* (ca. 1850) is a good extant comparison for considering Anglo-American and settler representations of Native American people and related landscape features. Native American folklore might even be understood as ubiquitous in the arts of North America from the mid-nineteenth and into the twentieth century. In literature, music, and theater, and later in cinema and popular fiction, the North American landscape is fantasized as a vast and unspoiled wilderness, as a kind of Eden ripe for the picking, but equally waiting for its fall. The persistent presence of indigenous populations as either essentially wild and warlike or as hapless innocents serves on the one hand to legitimize and then on the other to mask the violent displacement of entire indigenous populations. *The White Fawn of the Mississippi River* is assigned a particular kind of utility in relation to this narrative, standing in as a tragic and heroic counterpoint to the implied civility and order that is understood in the waltzes and marches. The London performances of Banvard's panorama can be read as a particular high–point of its various iterations and instances of performance. The ballad of the White Fawn

serves in multiple ways as a romantic interlude, and the fact that Banvard commissioned a second, more dramatic, version of it as a song serves as an additionally loaded dramatic demonstration of contemporary perceptions of the “Indian” character, in relation to a tragic narrative with folkloric implications. The retelling of the tragedy situates it as part of a mythic history and belies the realities that were unfolding across the landscape for indigenous inhabitants up to that time and after. John Bell compellingly defines the idea of “mythic history” in his discussion of a moving panorama representation of the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. This panorama by John Stevens (ca. 1870) known as the *Sioux War Panorama*, is characterized by Bell as an epic propaganda performance (Bell, John. 2008).

The White Fawn of the Mississippi River is a retelling of a battle between a band of Kansas warriors and another unnamed tribe. The White Fawn is the daughter of an unnamed Kansas Chief and she is betrothed to one of the Kansan combatants. The story is told from her vantage point, and in order to safely observe the battle, she has climbed to the top of a rock pinnacle, next to the river. From here she witnesses the destruction of her kinsmen including her husband-to-be. The demise of these Kansas tribespeople and their foe is explained with a sense of inevitability that stems from their apparently brave yet single–minded propensity for fighting to the death. Banvard’s text describes their fate:

> Twas the last time they met though their numbers were few,
> Yet each was a brave that was steady and true;
> And bravely they fought till the battles dread sound
> Ceased as the Kansas last brave bit the ground.
> (Schwieso and Banvard 1848.)

The implications, while not fully spelled out, are clear: the demise of this band of Kansas braves is framed as being all of their own doing, stemming from a kind of resolved intractability. The song continues with a description of how the White Fawn’s own subsequent demise comes from the same kind of noble stoicism. Following the defeat of her band, and compounded by a fear for her own life, the White Fawn remains atop the rocky pillar where she herself then perishes. Here again describing her fate are Banvard’s words,

> The White Fawn remains but she sheds not a tear,
> There lonely she sits from morning till night,
> Until her sad spirit from earth takes its flight,
> Her bones there remain and are whitened by time
> And among them now blooms the wild creeping vine
> Yet still on that rock when the dews glisten bright
> In the beams of the stars that glow in the night,
> Her spirit is seen as if guarding the dell
> Where the last of her tribe her Lover Fell.
> (Schwieso and Banvard 1848.)

Understanding the context of such a narrative image points to a range of iterations that precede the 1840s and have persisted well into the twentieth century. Consideration of the *Sioux War Panorama* alongside these earlier representations in Banvard's work can be read as indicators of an increase in the distresses being met by Native Americans in the second half of the nineteenth century. The White Fawn is situated as a representative of all that is pure and innocent in the indigenous landscape, and simultaneously all that is lost. It is a narrative modeled in some respects on a biblical hubris: the brave Kansans are all cast out of paradise. With the additional implication that if they stopped fighting each other and learned to temper their passions their paradise could persist. This is a reality that is addressed without a hint of reflection on who is doing the casting out. It is also an image that compounds a sense of indigenous people as being close to nature, and like nature, with the capacity to endure through the seasons.

The final embodiment of the White Fawn as a pile of bones, bleached white by time, and an apparition seen in starlight, constructs a romantic fatalistic echo with another Christian image, though as a kind of natural resurrection from the dead as a vine. This added detail, of bleached bones entwined by a wild creeping vine, echoes very strongly too with much older Northern European folklore, particularly with that of the white goddess. The presence of a female deity who is associated particularly with white spring flowers is widespread in ancient European myths and stories. White goddess representations are also allied to the moon and fertility believed to be in evidence most strongly in hawthorne and elderflower blossoms (Frazer 1994; Graves 1948). While no white flowers are conjured in Banvard's poem, there is an implied whiteness throughout the scene. The image of White Fawn's "spirit" can be seen in the dew that is lit by starlight; something like a projection is being implied in this image that feels like it is placed ready for a clever stage trick. In terms of the subject, it doesn't get more romantic than this and Banvard situates the White Fawn as a blameless victim of circumstances, trapped in the stoic loneliness of an unswerving loyalty to her people.

The specific location of the bluffs upon which the White Fawn perished is hard to discern, and there appears to be a lot of similar locations where stories of a like character are connected to rock formations. The press clippings in the Banvard scrapbook indicate that the story is situated at the Bluffs of Selma, an area known for its limestone bluffs and lead deposits (Figs. 8 and 9; compare with Fig. 5). Today the bluffs have almost disappeared. Following the initial extraction of lead in the 1850s, the land was acquired by the River Cement Company, and the white limestone rock formations are likely to have been turned into cement that was used to build cities along the river and throughout the Midwest.

The retelling of Indian stories similarly preoccupies the closing sections and appendixes of Mark Twain's memoir *Life on the Mississippi*, and he firmly connects such narrative details to the Panorama Man who is then given a role as a kind of folkloric custodian. Twain acknowledges that many important details of Native American his-

TRIBUTARY LINES.

But what comes here? this world of waters bears
With its oft changing scene

... there to-morrow and every night during the week.

Banvard's Panorama, at the Panorama Building, Broadway, continues to attract crowds of citizens. It is the largest painting in the world, and well deserves the extensive patronage bestowed upon it.

The Learned Canary Birds are still exhibiting at the Society Library three times a day; and if you would be surprised and delighted, by all means pay it a visit, and persuade your friends to go.

BANVARD'S PANORAMA OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER.

The first thing that arrests the attention of the spectator on beholding this work, is its immensity. There is nothing in ancient art to be compared with it; and the moderns, though operating on a grand scale, must yield to it the palm for extensive scope of design and romantic execution.

Raphael and Michael Angelo painted by the square yard; Sir Benjamin West by the acre; but John Banvard litterally by the mile.

It was a great achievement certainly, which brought philosophy to our very doors; to be read of all men. How extraordinary then must that work be, which has transported the Mississippi to the city of New York, and is now exhibiting it to the curious, in Broadway. I had heard of a plaintiff prosecuting for damage to his hrsoe, who produced the injured steed in court to the astonished jury, as a witness in his favor; but what a trifle that is to taking up the Father of Waters, and making him roll along twelve hundred miles of his course in the circumference of an Exhibition Room!

In the next place I ouserve that individuals are not overlaid and lost in the vast multiplicity o objects, like a small man in a mob. Cities forests, rocks, haunts of banditti, savages, steamboats, the night and the storm, are made to pass before you with wonderful distinctness, and with an interest peculiar to each. A dweller on the banks of the great river may here recognize hi home, and though he may not be able quite t clasp his absent wife and children to his bosom, may see the very house, which contains these objects that are so dear to him. The employployments of the people are vividly sketched, the natural scenery lies all revealed, you behold the flatboat contending with the snag, and the steamboats with each other in the race. Life on the river glows upon the canvass.

But there is very much obtained "not promised in the bills." Mr. Banvard has not expended the whole of his brains upon his picture. *As the stately pageant marches by he communicates to each prominent locality, some characteristic interest. He throws a charm over this rocky precipice by the recitation of the beautiful legend of the white Fawn: over another by the story of an attack from the Plumb Point robbers,* interspersing sober description with natural humor and shrewd anecdote. In short, Mr. Banvard is a considerable part of the exhibition himself, but without the least varnish or paint; those articles being wholly expended on the canvass. Appropriate and agreeable music on the piano adds much to the impression made by its kindred art.

The third fact to be noted is that the artist is an American. This is not perhaps so very extraordinary. It cannot be matter of surprise that the largest of countries should ...

THE SEAT OF THE WHITE FAWN.

FROM BANVARD'S CELEBRATED PANORAMA OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER.

This name is given to a somewhat singular mass of limestone rock, which projects up among the "Bluffs of Selma," on the margin of the majestic Mississippi. These bluffs come in on the west bank of the stream, about thirty miles below the city of St. Louis, and are remarkable for their highly picturesque and romantic appearance. They assume a great variety of fanciful shapes, resembling the ruins of ancient cities; and the imagination can, with facility, form them into towers, fortresses, minarets and the like. They vary from two to four hundred feet in height, presenting a bold and striking front to the river. The base of some of them have uniform niches and arches, as uniform and order-like as if they were cut out by the hand of some skillful mechanic. One in particular, which Mr. Banvard has very appropriately named the "Architectural bluff," resembles the *facade* of some mighty temple, with uniform ground arches. It is a question how these arches came. Some suppose they were cut their by the wind, and others again, by abrasion of waters.

There is a romantic Indian legend connected with the rock in the engraving above, which Mr. Banvard has not only, with his skill as an artist, painted in his beautiful panorama; but, in his versatile talent, described in the following poem:

[Written for the Atlas.]

Banvard's Panorama.—The exhibitions of this great work are still attended by delighted crowds. The Hall is well filled every evening, and still would be if much larger. The different points of interest on this great river are depicted with much skill by the artist. The moonlight views are admirably managed, and would of themselves alone speak well of Mr. Banvard as an artist. There is no pleasanter and more instructive place of amusement, for an evening or two, than this exhibition, and we advise every one to attend. The afternoon exhibitions come off on Wednesdays and Saturdays, at 3 o'clock.

Banvard's Panorama of the Mississippi.—This fine work is as popular as ever; those who go to see it once are so charmed that they return again and again, and at each successive visit are more and more pleased with the great accuracy and truthfulness of this herculean work. The perseverance exhibited by Banvard in this undertaking is now meeting its full reward.

The Mississippi Panorama.—This immense painting continues to draw full and fashionable houses, and country people flock in on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons, to witness it. Many schools have visited it, and we trust no teacher will miss the opportunity of taking their pupils, as the knowledge inculcated is worth more than a year's hard study. We are glad to know that Mr. Banvard is meeting with excellent success, for certainly he is deserving of it; and no one should fail to pay it a visit.

Fig. 8: "The Seat of the White Fawn" (Sunday Atlas?) illustration. John Banvard and Family Papers. 1840s–1850s. Scrapbook, p. 10. Compare to Fig. 5. Image, N. Lowe; courtesy of the Minnesota History Society, Saint Paul, Minnesota.

Fig. 9: "The Bluffs of Selma" news illustrations. John Banvard and Family Papers. 1840s–1850s. Scrapbook, p. 21. Compare to Figs. 8 and 5. Image, N. Lowe; courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul, Minnesota.

tory are in danger of being lost and makes a point of offering a brief narration of the scholarship and its importance for recalling landscape details and traditional life ways. Again, on the river north of La Crosse, Wisconsin, Twain puts these details forward as coming from the conversation with the Panorama Man:

> And so we glide along: in due time encountering those majestic domes, the mighty Sugar Loaf, and the sublime Maiden Rock—which latter, romantic superstition has invested with a voice; and ofttimes as the birch canoe glides near, at twilight, the dusky paddler fancies he hears the soft sweet music of the long-departed Winona, darling of Indian song and story (Twain 1961, 314).

The Panorama Man goes on to retell the story of Maiden Rock, "which is not only a picturesque spot, but is full of romantic interest from the event which gave it its name" (Twain 1961, 315). The story of Maiden Rock in Twain's retelling is presented as, "a favorite resort for the Sioux Indians on account of the fine fishing and hunting to be had there" (Twain 1961, 315). Like Banvard's White Fawn, this story concerns a maiden and her betrothed and it concludes again in the maiden's demise. While this

particular rock feature is not included in Banvard's panorama pamphlets, Maiden Rock is depicted by Henry Lewis in his 1854 publication *Das Illustrirte Mississippithal* (Lewis 1854–1857). Lewis's illustrations are understood to have been based upon his 1848 panorama, and they depict the presence of Native American lives and activities with greater frequency than Banvard appears to have done (Fig. 10).

Fig. 10: Henry Lewis, *The Maiden Rock*. (Der Werona Felsen.) From *Das Illustrirte Mississippithal*, Arnz & Co., Dusseldorf, Germany, 1854–58. Color lithograph, 13.7 × 19.7 cm (5 3/8 × 7 3/4 in). Image, Saint Louis Art Museum.

Again, in the Panorama conversation recounted by Twain, he confirms something that Lewis seems to have likewise known about: "this whole region is blanketed with Indian tales and traditions." (Twain 1961, 316). Twain uses the opportunity in the final chapter of his book to suggest a lineage for the scholarship and collection of such stories. He begins by discounting the possible fabrications and exaggerations and acknowledges the story of Winona as a notable exception. Then he adds:

> If I would hunt up Mr. Schoolcraft's book, published nearly fifty years ago, and now doubtless out of print, I would find some Indian inventions in it that were very far from being barren of incident and imagination; that the talks of Hiawatha were of this sort, and they came from Schoolcraft's book; and that there were others in the same book which Mr. Longfellow could have turned into verse with good effect (Twain 1961, 317).

Here Twain is referencing the work of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft (1793–1864), a geographer, geologist and ethnographer whose books were a synthesis of his life and work

as a government agent, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (American, 1807–1882), a poet and teacher who wrote *The Song of Hiawatha.*

All of these reflections offer a series of insights into the currency of the content in Banvard's panorama while also suggesting its atmospheric or experiential effects. The panorama was understood for its educational value and its capacities as entertainment. One of the many accounts included in the Banvard scrapbook from 1848 clearly articulates the capacity of audiences for both: "There is no pleasanter and more instructive place of amusement, for an evening or two, than this exhibition, and we advise everyone to attend" (*John Banvard and Family Papers*, Scrapbook, 10). The feeling is of wonder and amazement; viewing the panorama is an opportunity to both explore without traveling and to experience a sense of the demands that might be experienced if one were to travel. Viewing a long panoramic image presupposes a sense of movement through both time and space. As reviews in the New York Sunday newspapers make evident, the idea that these views might evoke a real experience was firmly understood.

Bearing in mind that many reports were given over to a certain hyperbolic tone as a means of selling tickets, the immersive world in Banvard's panorama endures as a series of echoes in the archival record. A performance of the musical elements has offered a living representation of Banvard's work. But a performance in the present, will always remain as such, as unreproducible beyond the event. Re-performance is effective for conjuring a place where a viewer can imagine for themselves how a mid-Victorian experience might have been, and such a compelling glimpse of the entire experience will always be a matter of perhaps enjoyable, entertaining and imaginative conjecture.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to friends and members of the International Panorama Council who at our annual conferences offer a receptive, responsive and critical forum for sharing new work and ideas on all things panoramic. In preparation for this paper and its initial presentation at the 2023 conference in Iowa City I received significant support in realizing the performance opportunity from Liz Crooks, Director at University of Iowa Pentacrest Museums. Liz facilitated my introductions to Élise DesChamps and Doreen Lee in the University of Iowa, School of Music, and gave us access to the historic, rebuilt 1876 Steinway grand piano "Rose," which is part of the collection of the Pentacrest Museums. The opportunity to rediscover the music written for Banvard's Panorama with that piano was perfect enough and was made all the more sublime with the musical interpretations and dramatic skills of Élise DesChamps and Doreen Lee. I offer them both my endless gratitude. Special thanks are owed also for his digi-

tal prowess to Jeffrey Ose Ohuaregbe M.Arc. Graduate at the School of The Art Institute of Chicago.

In my research I have been fortunate to have had access to some remarkable archival materials. At the Maclean Collection in Lake Bluff Illinois my work has been supported by Dr. Richard Pegg, and Andrew J. Reading. At the Codington County Heritage Museum, Watertown, South Dakota, I'd like to thank in particular, Christy Lickei and Roger Whittle and members of the Banvard focused community who shared everything they could relating to John Banvard and welcomed me so generously. I'd like to thank everyone at Saint Louis Art Museum for helping me in checking sources working closely with me to explore their holdings, especially the collections and archive staff but in particular, Melissa Wolfe, Curator of American Art, and Amy Torbert, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Associate Curator of American. Many thanks also are owed to Julie Dunn-Morton Curator of Fine Art and Endowed Research Professor at the Saint Louis Mercantile Library at UMSL. Many thanks to the archivists and librarians at the Minnesota History Center, St. Paul, Minnesota, for providing access to the Banvard Family papers. Thanks must also be offered to James Arsenault of James Arsenault & Company for generously providing me with his high quality photograph of sheet music cover of *The White Fawn of the Mississippi River.*

Author Biography

Nicholas C. Lowe is an interdisciplinary visual artist, writer, educator and curator whose work is known for its contextual and documentary approaches. Lowe is a Professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and is the John H. Bryan Chair of Historic Preservation. Nicholas has been a member of the International Panorama Council since 2018; serves currently as the Outreach Coordinator; and is an Executive Editor for the *Panoramic and Immersive Media Studies* Yearbook.

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