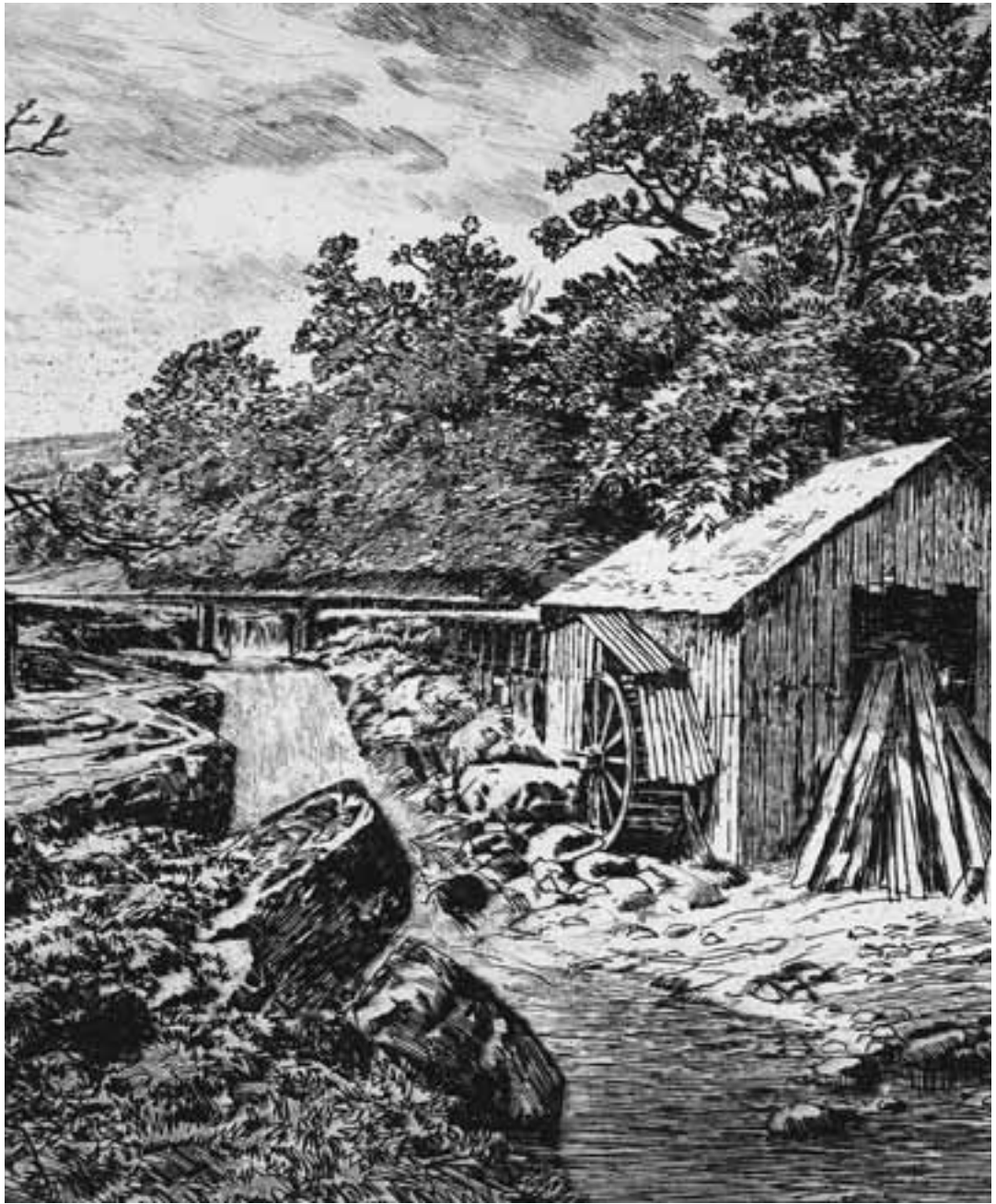




Detail of Homer Watson, *The Pioneer Mill*, State II/III, 1890, etching. (see Fig. 2)

Homer Watson's *The Pioneer Mill*: The Making and Marketing of a Print in the Canadian Etching Revival

ROSEMARIE L. TOVELL

In 1890, while living in England, Homer Watson (1855–1936) made an etching after his most famous painting *The Pioneer Mill*, which, as part of Queen Victoria's collection, hung in Windsor Castle. Watson undertook the whole process of making the print, from drawing a copy of the painting, to etching and printing the plate in a limited edition on a hand operated press. In terms of printmaking at that date, it was a hybrid, part reproduction, part artist's print – a not uncommon aspect of printmaking which Sylvester Koehler, the influential American writer and curator of prints, termed “replicas.”¹ As an expression of an artist's work in another medium, replicas were included in the fine art category of printmaking, as much as it had been defined in those days. In North America, during the late 1800s, replicas were highly desirable, exhibited at the most prestigious exhibition venues, and praised by the art writers. They constituted a significant aspect of the Etching Revival, a nineteenth-century movement among artists to reclaim printmaking, and etching in particular, as a creative medium. Watson's *The Pioneer Mill* was the most ambitious effort by any Canadian artist to make an etching of the highest aesthetic quality. In theory, it should have brought him attention at home as one of Canada's finest etchers and proven to be a lucrative marketing venture. Unhappily, it did neither. Nevertheless, the making of *The Pioneer Mill* offers a unique glimpse into the making and marketing of a print in the Canadian Etching Revival.

To better understand the context of Watson's career as an etcher, it is necessary to describe the evolution of the Etching Revival.² It began in France and Britain during the 1840s and 1850s as artists sought to reclaim printmaking. They consciously looked to the old masters such as Rembrandt for their inspiration and guide and chose etching as their printmaking medium because it was practiced by the most admired old masters. In addition, etching was able to capture the expressive line and tone of drawing, while the whole process could be done in the intimacy of one's own studio. Yet, the technique is best learnt through experimentation in the company of other etchers and this in turn led to the formation of painter-etcher societies and the exhibition venues established by these societies. The most influential

painter-etchers of this period in France were Charles Meryon (1821–1868) and the Barbizon artists, while in Britain it was Francis Seymour Haden (1818–1910) and James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834–1903).

The Etching Revival also introduced new dealer-publishers who promoted the new art, not only to attract collectors, but to encourage artists to take up the etching needle in order to provide them with attractive stock. Alfred Cadart was the first such dealer-publisher who, after having established the Société des Aquafortistes, left Paris in 1866 for New York seeking out new collectors and artists. Cadart's efforts led to the foundation of the New York Etching Club in 1877; this fraternal organization not only fostered etching among its members, but also held annual exhibitions. The Club became the standard bearer for the etching movement in North America, spawning similar societies in Cincinnati, Boston, Philadelphia, Brooklyn, and Toronto.

The evolution of the Canadian Etching Revival is best demonstrated by the appearance of prints in several major exhibitions. In 1880, the Royal Canadian Academy gave a cursory nod to the Revival by showing the etchings of J.W.H. Watts (1850–1917) and J.C. Miles (1837–1911). However, the first significant event was the *First Exhibition of Works of Art in Black and White* organized by the Art Association of Montreal in 1881. It was an ambitious show, constituted primarily of prints.³ It attempted to display the historical development of printmaking from Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) to Whistler. It is important to note that what was considered an “original work of art” was not as clear-cut as it is today. Etched reproductions of Rembrandt etchings were praised as much as the master's own prints, and reproductive engravings, such as William Woollett's 1776 engraving after Benjamin West's *The Death of Wolfe*, found a comfortable spot among the artist's prints executed by the modern masters such as Whistler.

Canadian painter-etchers read the British and French publications on the subject and were also interacting directly with their American counterparts. In 1884 the Association of Canadian Etchers was formed in Toronto and maintained close contact with the New York Etching Club and the Philadelphia Society of Etchers. Members of the Canadian association included T. Mower Martin (1838–1934), A. Dickson Patterson (1854–1930), and George Reid (1860–1947). With the assistance of the New York and the Philadelphia societies, the Association of Canadian Etchers mounted a large international exhibition which was shown at the Ontario Society of Artists rooms in March 1885. It is not known if Homer Watson visited the exhibition but given his friendships with Mower Martin and other members of the Association, he could well have done. A tantalizing reference in a letter from his dealer, James Spooner, suggests that Watson considered purchasing an etching, likely from the show.⁴

Watson was in England when the last major print exhibition of the decade took place in Canada. However his friend J.W.H. Watts sent him an enthusiastic report.⁵ In 1888 the Art Association of Montreal mounted *The Second Black and White Exhibition, Etchings*; this exhibition confirmed an emerging evolution of connoisseurship, those concepts and criteria that made prints desirable to the private collector as significant works of art. The organizers of the exhibition consciously selected what was described in the catalogue as “confined to one branch of the engraver’s art, but that probably the highest – Etching.”⁶ The selection and the catalogue entries carefully denoted the types of proofs (e.g. signed, trial, etc), states, and where possible, catalogue raisonné numbers. Nevertheless, the selection still included what we would consider reproductions of paintings and they were treated with the same importance as a limited edition work made by painter-etchers such as Haden, Meryon, or Rembrandt.

These three art exhibitions provide some insight into the Etching Revival in Canada’s two principal cities, Montreal and Toronto. Montreal evidently had a well established and sophisticated group of collectors who included prints as part of their private art collections. The catalogues to the two *Black and White* exhibitions suggest that these Montreal collections were well stocked with a handsome number of the most sought after engravings and contemporary etchings from Europe. The catalogues also record that the New York dealer Frederick Keppel lent Old Master prints and provide stark evidence that works by Canadian artists were almost entirely absent. The only Canadian artist to exhibit a *bona fide* painter-etcher print was Henry Sandham (1842–1910) in 1888, by then a resident of Boston.

This paucity of Canadian exhibitors at the Art Associations exhibitions underlined that Montreal’s lack of resident painter-etchers did not incite the serious print collectors to look to the Canadian printmaking centre of Toronto. Instead, Montreal’s collectors chose to acquire international work. In Toronto the dilemma was reversed; the Toronto Association of Canadian Etchers exhibition was entirely artist-generated with only one private collector, John Ross Robertson, lending two European etchings. The show was a harsh demonstration that Toronto lacked collectors of Montreal’s number and calibre who could and would support the city’s small community of painter-etchers. In fact, Montreal and Toronto’s print collectors did not show interest in Canadian prints until the arrival of Clarence Gagnon’s (1881–1942) internationally celebrated etchings during the first decade of the twentieth century, a period of renewed printmaking activity described as the Second Etching Revival.

The customs duty levied on all prints at their point of entry created a further impediment to the success of the late nineteenth-century Etching

Revival in Canada. Whether reproductive engravings or limited editioned artist's prints, duty was imposed on prints brought into the country whether for possible sale, already purchased by a private collector, or merely for loan to exhibitions. Consequently, the costs incurred by an institution or group who wished to borrow for an international exhibition were prohibitive. This duty also drove up the price of any print that a Canadian artist created abroad.

Making *The Pioneer Mill*

It was in this climate that Homer Watson undertook his own venture into the Etching Revival.

Homer Watson was born in 1855 at Doon, Ontario, the son of Ransford Watson, a mill owner. When Homer was only seven years of age, his father died and by 1870 he had also lost his elder brother. Forced to be self-reliant, Watson developed a keen ambition to succeed and, from an early age, showed an interest in art. He taught himself to draw by copying the black and white wood engravings and other illustrations in popular periodicals and books. He would later admit that "in all the early drawings I observed as closely as an engraver would."⁷ Through this early training he developed a brusque and linearly dense style of pen and ink drawing that emphasised the texture and masses of Doon's rural landscape. About 1874 Watson left for Toronto, apparently to work at the Notman & Fraser Photographic Studio; this brought him into direct contact with some of Toronto's leading artists such as John Arthur Fraser (1838–1898), Lucius O'Brien (1832–1899), and T. Mower Martin.⁸ In 1878, his election to membership in the Ontario Society of Artists marked his first true induction into the Canadian art community.

Two years later, upon the formation of the Royal Canadian Academy under the patronage of the Governor General, the Marquis of Lorne, Watson was elected to associate membership and exhibited *The Pioneer Mill* at the Academy's opening exhibition in March 1880.⁹ The painting was immediately purchased by Lorne and sent to Windsor Castle as a gift to his mother-in-law, Queen Victoria. This was an unprecedented honour for a Canadian artist and, within weeks, it was celebrated with a full-page illustration in the *Canadian Illustrated News*.¹⁰ The following year, Lorne purchased two more canvases by Watson, *The Last Day of the Drought*, again for the Royal Collection, and *An April Day* for himself.

In 1882 Watson was duly elected to full membership in the Royal Canadian Academy. By this time he had found a Toronto dealer in James Spooner whose tobacco shop and art gallery was a few doors away from the Ontario Society of Artists galleries on King Street. That same year, Oscar Wilde visited Toronto. Watson's paintings caught his attention, and while they did not meet, Wilde's admiration for Watson's work became well known.¹¹

Here was a potential introduction into the centre of London's art community. These early achievements and the warm reception of his paintings at the 1886 *Indian and Colonial Exhibition* in London prompted Watson's decision to leave the periphery of the British Empire for its centre. In the summer of 1887, he sailed for Britain and by the end of August was staying with his wife's cousin in Maidenhead, west of London.

Watson spent his first few months in Maidenhead slowly acquainting himself with the London art scene and viewing all the exhibitions and museums. George Clausen (1852–1944) was among the first artists whose paintings attracted his attention and admiration; Watson first saw Clausen's work at the London art dealership Goupil & Cie.¹² Already a well-established artist, Clausen was known for his pastoral subjects influenced by Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848–1884) and Jean-François Millet (1814–1875). By 1884 he had begun to etch at his studio in Cookham Dene, just a mile up the Thames from Maidenhead.¹³ Watson and Clausen soon struck up a friendship and by December they were visiting each other regularly. However, at this time there was apparently no discussion of etching.¹⁴ For the time being, Watson was concentrating on painting and, in particular, on a long requested commission from Oscar Wilde, which he delivered in February 1888.¹⁵

By April, Watson and his wife had moved into London where he took a studio on a weekly basis on Camden Road.¹⁶ In June Watson renewed his contact with the Marquis of Lorne, paying him a visit at Kensington Palace in order to make some "alterations" to *An April Day*.¹⁷ Their discussion centred on Watson's paintings, Lorne expressing an interest to see more.¹⁸ The most immediate outcome of this interview was Lorne's letter of recommendation to the French dealer Adolphe Goupil whose London branch was one of the city's most prestigious dealerships. By mid-July the London manager of "the greatest picture dealer in the world . . . came up to our studio . . . and took two to sell."¹⁹ This exciting event took place during a visit from A.D. Patterson who was passing through London on his way to Goupil's shop in Paris to have his portrait of Sir John A. Macdonald reproduced as a limited editioned photogravure.²⁰

Patterson's project, Watson's renewed acquaintance with Lorne, and his new connection with Goupil's, as well as the memories of the illustration in *The Canadian Illustrated News*, may have planted the seed of an idea to do something similar with his most famous canvas, *The Pioneer Mill*. However, nothing would happen for the time being; within a couple of weeks, Watson had joined his friend James Kerr-Lawson in Pittenweem, Scotland, for an extended visit which would last through the winter of 1888–1889.²¹

In April 1889 Watson visited Paris and by early May he had returned to London in time to see his own paintings hanging at the Royal Academy's annual exhibition. But he was not happy in London and had already begun

to contemplate a place in the country. There was no question, however, of leaving Britain: Watson was just beginning to receive recognition. In addition to the Royal Academy exhibition, his work was shown at the Royal Glasgow Institute, the Autumn Exhibition of Modern Pictures at the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool, and the Royal Society of British Artists. In August, a family tragedy brought the Watsons back to their relatives at Maidenhead and while they did not mind consoling their cousins over the sudden death of their daughter, Homer Watson found himself constricted by lack of space. Nevertheless, being in Maidenhead did place Watson back into Clausen's orbit and it was at this time that Clausen apparently looked over Watson's pen and ink drawings. Clausen saw immediately that their expressively atmospheric quality and their emphasis on line to create tone and texture indicated that Watson would make a very good etcher.²² It was likely Clausen who persuaded Watson to consider making an etching after *The Pioneer Mill* rather than having it reproduced as a photogravure or steel engraving. With Watson now living close to Windsor Castle, all the threads could now be joined.

By the first week in October 1889, Homer Watson was laying plans to undertake his etching of *The Pioneer Mill*. On 7 October, Roxanne Watson wrote: "Homer wrote to the Marquis of Lorne the other day asking if he would get him permission to view the 'Pioneer Mill' at Windsor. He did so and now we are only waiting until I get better to go over and see it. Homer thinks of making an etching of it. He thinks it may take in Canada if . . . worked properly."²³ Two weeks later on 20 October, Roxanne could report: "The Marquis of Lorne secured for Homer the privilege of making an etching of the 'Pioneer Mill'. Mr. Clausen does a little in that line so he will give him a few pointers."²⁴

Before work could begin, Watson was in desperate need of new accommodations and access to a press. Clausen came to the rescue with the information that fellow artist Edward John Gregory (1850–1909), also a resident of Cookham Dene, wanted to rent his house immediately and Gregory's etching press was included in the furnishings. The press was the main attraction for Watson and in early December the Watsons moved in. Within days, he was already planning to make his copy drawing of *The Pioneer Mill* and taking his first etching lessons from Clausen. Roxanne Watson wrote:

We are settled in our home and expect to go to Windsor this week for Homer to get a drawing from "The Pioneer Mill" . . . We came here on account of the etching, there being an etching-press right in the house. Homer thought it would be so hard to take proofs as the work

proceeded, and he began last night on a small copper-plate from his first trial. I think of going to Maidenhead to-day to get acids and other things so that he will have it ready to print to-morrow night when Mr. Clausen comes . . . We expect them [The Clausens] over to-morrow to do some printing on our press.

I do not expect the first one will be quite a success, but if Homer masters the art this winter we will be satisfied, and with Mr. Clausen's assistance he should be able to do that.²⁵

Watson began etching by creating small-format landscape etchings reminiscent of the small ink drawings he had made at Doon.²⁶ Four were etched in December 1889 and early January 1890. In January Watson mailed six proofs in two separate mailings to James Kerr-Lawson in Scotland and at least seven proofs of four subjects to Phoebe Watson in Doon.²⁷ Watson had evidently printed these subjects as exercises to master the medium before he undertook the large plate of *The Pioneer Mill*. Most are etched to resemble his pen and ink drawings while one, *The Faggot Gatherer*, was deeply etched in emulation of his brush and ink drawings.²⁸

Phoebe Watson's shipment offers the best clue as to the order of the making of these etchings. On the back of the six proofs, now in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Watson had numbered them chronologically: numbers 1 and 2, *Hay Ricks* (states i/ii & ii/ii); numbers 3 and 4, *The Faggot Gatherer* (states i/ii & ii/ii); number 5, *Landscape with Road*; number 6 (subject and location unknown); and number 7, *Landscape with House and Road* (state i/ii). This sequence demonstrates Watson's increasing comfort with the medium as he began to explore variations in the character of the etched lines and the use of plate tone. Kerr-Lawson received the second shipment of proofs after 11 January and he thought that the second state of *Landscape with House and Road* was particularly good: "the upright with the horse [which appears only in the second state] is best [;] it expands infinitely beyond the borders of the plate and the line that radiate[s] inwards behind the dark tree gives a magical depth and charm."²⁹ While Kerr-Lawson found a marked improvement between the first and second set of etchings sent to him, he declared all of Watson's first efforts "a howling success" and encouraged him to take on *The Pioneer Mill* "in as large and reckless a manner as the smaller ones" and that he should add a credit line noting the royal warrant. However, as Watson began work on *The Pioneer Mill*, he made at least one additional small etching, *Landscape with Oak Trees*; the printing of this etching most closely resembles the final state printing of *The Pioneer Mill*.³⁰

If Watson's five small etchings are compared to Clausen's etchings of this period, it is clearly evident that Clausen and Watson's etchings are remarkably



1 | Homer Watson, *The Pioneer Mill*, State 1/III, 1890, etching, 30.1 × 41 cm (plate), National Gallery of Canada. (Photo: National Gallery of Canada, 37239 recto)

similar in style. However, the influence of Clausen on Watson's style is debatable. It only takes a quick glance at Watson's pen and ink sketches to see that he did not have to alter his drawing style or the relatively small size and format of his images to compensate for any lack of experience with the etcher's needle. However, it can be said that Watson readily adopted Clausen's rough and ready approach to the technique of etching rather than adopting the ethereal line and the chastely printed plate typical of the refined aesthetics of etching that were preferred by the art critics and print connoisseurs. So while Clausen was clearly teaching Watson how to etch, their relationship can best be described as two kindred artists sharing an extraordinarily sympathetic aesthetic.

At the outset, Watson followed Kerr-Lawson's advice when he made *The Pioneer Mill*. The evolution of the print demonstrates Watson's efforts to create a print that was both faithful to his own style of drawing but also something that would appeal to the market place. The print was completed



2 | Homer Watson, *The Pioneer Mill*, State II/III, 1890, etching, 30.1 × 41 cm (plate), National Gallery of Canada. (Photo: National Gallery of Canada, 7899)

in three states – that is, he reworked the image between the three separate bitings of the plate in an acid bath. He began etching the plate by creating a very complete, deeply bitten composition that would likely have been very similar to the copy drawing made at Windsor Castle (Fig. 1). Additional states added elements of shading that somewhat softened the harshness of the first state and gave a greater sense of mood and depth to the composition (Fig. 2). In the final state, to further “sculpt” the image, Watson employed plate tone, which is created by deliberately leaving a residue film of ink on the surface of the plate in specific areas to give the print a painterly tonal effect (Figs. 3 and 4). In other words, without abandoning his own personal style of drawing, Watson was working towards those creamy toned, delicately etched, and immaculately printed plates, created by the most fashionable painter-etchers and master printers, and marketed by the leading dealer-publishers. And as we shall see, this final style of printing may have been influenced by the comments of his new Toronto dealer, John Payne.



3 | Homer Watson, *The Pioneer Mill*, State III/III, 1890, etching, 30.1 × 41 cm (plate), private collection (ex-coll: Lucius O'Brien). (Photo: National Gallery of Canada)



4 | Homer Watson, *The Pioneer Mill*, State III/III, 1890, etching, 30.1 × 41 cm (plate), Winnipeg Art Gallery (G-87-321). Acquired with funds from the Naylor Bequest. (Photo: Ernest Mayer, Winnipeg)

Marketing *The Pioneer Mill*

Homer Watson's plan was to market his prints exclusively in Canada with the assistance of John Payne. To understand why his career as a painter-etcher eventually failed, an examination of the Canadian commercial milieu into which Watson introduced his etching of *The Pioneer Mill* is in order.

By the mid-nineteenth century, printmaking and print collecting were dominated by highly finished engraved reproductions of paintings. The popularity of engraved reproductions began with Woollett's engraving of West's *The Death of Wolfe*, published in 1776 by John Boydell and William Ryland. It was an unprecedented and phenomenal publishing success and all those involved made their fortunes. It is said Woollett alone made between £5,000 to £7,000 on foreign sales while Boydell stated in 1790 his sales receipts had reached £15,000.³¹ Painters soon realized that serious money could be made by retaining copyright of their work and having it reproduced as engravings. As a result, reproductive engravings dominated artistic endeavours as well as the international market at the expense of prints made as original works of art. Seizing on this lucrative trade, printer-publishers were set up in London and Paris and, within surprisingly little time, across the Atlantic in New York.

These quality reproductive engravings flooded into the Canadian market as early as 1790 when *The Quebec Gazette* imported from England an "assortment of landscape and other prints most superbly executed."³² Booksellers also imported these engravings, but the most ambitious sales effort was made by the New York art dealer George Melksham Bourne who brought a large quantity of his stock to Quebec City in 1831. He was so successful with his exhibition and auction of these prints that within two weeks he had organized a second sale³³ at R.E. Kelly's auction house. At this sale, Bourne's 1830 catalogue was available to Quebec's prospective buyers and it shows exactly what Bourne had to offer: portraits of prominent people, historical scenes, genre subjects, landscapes and marines, sporting scenes, and a near complete set of *Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery*.³⁴ For collectors, these commonly described "high class" engravings were seen as a relatively inexpensive way of decorating their home while showing the world that they possessed some sophistication.

Thirty years after Bourne's auctions, there continued to be a healthy Canadian market for these reproductive engravings which were being sold through book shops and stationary stores as well as by William Scott in Montreal and Henry J. Matthews in Toronto, both of whom were art dealers and picture framers.³⁵

With the advent of the Etching Revival, dealer-publishers adapted their established relationships with the artists to the demands of this new artistic

movement. They encouraged the painter-etchers to take advantage of the Etching Revival's popularity by introducing their own work. As West's *Death of Wolfe* proved the fiscal rewards of reproductive engraving after a celebrated painting, so did Francis Seymour Haden's etching *Breaking up of the Agamemnon*, published in 1870. It launched the market for large editioned artist's etchings, earning Haden a total profit of £2,500.³⁶

By the early 1880s, the interest in etchings can only be described as a craze. Because Canada did not possess any dealer-publishers, the Canadian market was dependent on imports to satisfy the demand. Scott and Matthews continued to offer reproductive engravings as well as artist's etchings which they strongly suggested were the equal of original works of art.³⁷ It is difficult to categorise these prints relative to our current understanding of and terminology for reproductive prints and original artist's prints. The problem lies in the fact that, although artists played a part, print dealers and publishers were mainly responsible for defining the emerging connoisseur's market.

Christian Klackner and Frederick Keppel, both prominent New York dealers and promoters of fine art etching, best exemplify the two distinct types of print dealers that flourished during the 1880s. They were also the most active of the dealers who marketed and exhibited their stock in Canada. And it was their presentation and definitions of etching that would have an effect on the marketing of Homer Watson's *The Pioneer Mill*.

Christian Klackner was among the most successful publishers of large-editioned, commercially printed etchings. Offering the painter-etchers generous payments, Klackner purchased their plates outright.³⁸ He then worked with the best printers available, such as the master printer Henry Voigt of the New York print shop Kimmel & Voigt.

As a dealer, Klackner's *modus operandi* was to appeal to the collector's wallet. In the preface to his pamphlet *Proofs and Prints*, he boldly stated that its purpose was to explain how to "invest in its products" and that print collecting could be an "intelligent investment."³⁹ Because the lack of an international copyright meant that "anyone can pirate them," he specialized in American artists; their plates were protected by copyright and thus the prints' "value preserved, if not to advance with time."⁴⁰ Klackner sold both reproductive engravings and artist's etchings. To make engravings more desirable to collectors, they were given a hierarchy of categories that adopted a mix of old and new designations for prints. For Klackner, each proof category was printed in specific numbers: *remarque* proofs (which he incorrectly anglicised as "remark proofs") were the "choicest" printed in an edition of 50. On a descending scale of desirability, he systemized the remainder of the edition as 200 artist's proofs, 100 proofs before letters, and ending with an unlimited number of "plain proofs." It is important to note

that the first two classifications in Klackner's hierarchy: *remarque* proofs and artist's proofs, are new designations given to reproductive engravings in response to the practice of the nineteenth-century painter-etcher.⁴¹

Klackner differentiated etchings from engravings; he defined etchings as "fine art" because they are created using "greater manipulation of the plate in which additional effects can be secured by leaving a film of ink [plate tone] over portions of the plate which can delineate shades of sky and water, rich sweeps of shadow."⁴² Etchings could be printed by the artist or by a master printer under the instruction of the artist. They were also given their categories such as *remarque* proofs, artist's proofs, and so on. There was also the choice of their support – the most expensive being proofs on japan paper, then parchment, vellum, and satin, and finally plain wove paper. Prices for Klackner's etchings could range from \$1.00 to \$32.00, prices varied according to the subject, its proof category, and its support. There is no edition number attached to each type of proof so one must assume they were printed to meet demand.

Frederick Keppel was a completely different kind of print dealer. He was a true admirer and connoisseur of etching who saw his mission to be not simply a seller of prints, but also an educator of potential clients and protector of the market. Keppel understood that an educated and informed public was the best means to promote his product. In his pamphlet, *What Etchings Are*, he consistently stressed the creativity of the artist and the medium, noting, in direct contradiction to Klackner and his cohorts, that "there is no fixed and unalterable rule to regulate the order in which different proofs or states are issued, or the number of impressions taken from each state." He noted that a proof "may be broadly defined as an impression which bears intrinsic evidence that it is the early and consequently finest which the plate has yielded."⁴³

From the old masters to contemporary masters, Keppel sold only impressions of prints pulled by the artists or under their close supervision. He wrote that the terms "states" and "trial proofs" should be applied to those impressions where the painter-etcher worked out his or her ideas towards the final composition. To underline his case, he noted that one never hears of a Rembrandt or a Whistler etching as an artist's proof but rather by its state. In other words, for Keppel, the designation of proofs was not the artificial Klackner-like categorizing for monetary worth, but a description of the creative process. However, Keppel's writings demonstrated that his own rules were not cast in stone when it came to the prints of America's late nineteenth-century etchers. In his 1908 *Illustrated Catalogue of Etchings by American Artists*, he consistently described the prints of artists such as Stephen Parrish as "artist's proof."⁴⁴ His reason for doing so most likely would

have been to distinguish his stock of artist-pulled impressions from the mass-produced artist-authorized Klackner-type impressions printed from the same plates. Keppel's need to stress the artist's involvement with the printing of these etchings was important for, by 1908, the Klackner-type prints were practically worthless.⁴⁵

It was within this market with its competing sales strategies and conflicting attitudes to artistic intent that Watson attempted to sell his etching *The Pioneer Mill* through John Payne.

We know very little about Payne except that he was on the board of the Ontario Society of Artists Art Union from 1886 to 1891, which is the length of time that his activities can be traced with any certainty.⁴⁶ Payne's correspondence with Watson demonstrated his sincere admiration for Watson's art and indicated his familiarity with the Toronto art scene. His aspirations to become an art dealer seem to have begun and ended with his association with Watson.

Before he began working on the print, Watson consulted Payne on how to go about making a marketable etching. Payne apparently had no experience in this line and looked to Matthews Brothers for help.⁴⁷ In November 1889, after speaking with Henry J. Matthews,⁴⁸ Payne communicated his advice:

I mentioned the Etching matter to Matthews: he does not know much about the mechanical part of the business, nor does he know a great deal about anything else in the picture line. But for all that he will be a useful man to handle your Etchings: he thinks 50 proofs, signed by you would be ample; for all these you ought to get at least \$10 each and for the others \$5: this of course depends . . . on the subject and its handling – if the public catches on to it you ought to have no difficulty in selling quite a 'phew' of them. You bet I will do my levelest [sic] for you if you are successful in producing it.⁴⁹

This promise to do his "levelest" for this enterprise went beyond just selling the print. Payne believed that success included protecting Watson from the overwhelming mass marketing of the American print publishers who were flooding the Canadian market with high quality and relatively inexpensive work. Payne felt that "because if there is anything in it, the Americans are sure to copy it and sling them into Canada wholesale; it will be well to protect yourself in the States also: that is of course if the picture pans out O.K."⁵⁰

By 2 March 1890, Payne had received impressions of Watson's etchings, both the small etchings and the first impressions of *The Pioneer Mill* (possibly like Fig 2). Now with Watson's efforts in hand, Payne's reaction to them was less than encouraging, demonstrating the abundance of problems to do with

the Canadian print market from the imposition of high customs duties, the type of competition, the conservative and penny-pinching nature of the collectors and, as result, the pricing of Watson's etchings.

Well old man the Etchings have turned up O.K. the smaller batch came first – on which you placed a value of [£]10 – do you know there is a duty of 20 per cent on these things? – fortunately I got the Custom house appraiser to put his value on them and he knocked them down to \$10. I therefore paid \$2 only duty and 50 cents Brokerage fees. I don't think I can congratulate you on this batch old man – I feel sure they wont go off: not even in the O.S.A. portfolio. I wish I could write you more encouragingly but I don't feel it . . . Have you seen the 8 Etchings issued by the London Art Union Society? also 6 Etchings by the Glasgow Art Union? both sets can be got by subscribing [\$]1.10 to each Society: this being so I can assure yours wont catch on at one coupon even: of course you will say that yours are proofs, but that wont go down with the average picture man who wants something pleasing which I cant conscientiously say yours are – I shall however do all I can . . . and push them – I have seen Matthews Bros. about them and he confirms my impression by saying they wont sell – they showed me some small Etchings . . . they could sell for 50 cents each: so you see the difficulties there are in your way – I am getting half a dozen mats cut for six sets to put in the O.S.A. [Art Union] Portfolio at one coupon [i.e. \$5.00] each set. It's no use framing them up and charging 2 Coupons, because they wont go at that price – in fact I have my doubts their going off at all – . . . the public . . . will buy only what they are pleased with – no matter what the subject is or who the artist is. If the picture is not pleasing enough the devil himself wont make the public buy it.

The four Etchings of 'Pioneer Mill' turned up O.K. These are away ahead of the small Etchings and I think you will be an A.1 Copper bottom Etcher by and by. Of course these things 'cant be done' at the first attempt – practice will bring out the better stuff that is in you – the Pioneer Mill is one of your very best subjects – the 'Stone Road' would be a good thing to Etch so also would 'Gathering Gloom' 'Flitting Shadows' – also 'Where the Upland Dips' Could you not put your own name on the Etchings: also "By Kind Permission of Her Majesty": it will cost like blazes out here. I think you ought to sign them yourself in pencil.⁵¹

Despite Payne's disappointment with Watson's prints, he promised Watson that "I will do all I can . . . with the Etchings; but as I remarked in my last

letter there are Etchings here by the hundred – splendid in subject, not proofs, selling for \$5 or less.”⁵²

Apparently after reading Payne’s critique of the four impressions he had sent of *The Pioneer Mill*, Watson set about reworking the image; the result was possibly the third state with its increased use of plate tone, which conformed to the more popular taste (Figs. 3 and 4). It would seem that Watson did print the plate in an edition of fifty as recommended by Matthews. Upon receiving his first large allotment of the third state impressions of *The Pioneer Mill* in late March 1890, Payne expressed his pleasure at the improvements.⁵³

Of the eight known impressions of the third state of this print, two types of printing can be seen. One type is evident in the Winnipeg Art Gallery’s third state impression. It is printed in raw umber coloured ink with a heavy use of plate tone and closely resembles the dark tonality of the original painting (Fig. 4). The other print variation is exemplified by the impression given to Lucius O’Brien (private collection) (Fig. 3). It is printed in a black/brown ink, with a lighter use of plate tone that allows for the more graphic qualities of the composition to be revealed. This more graphic style is in keeping with the style of etching preferred by the collectors of the day and the black/brown ink was favoured by the old masters as well as nineteenth-century painter-etchers. The brighter reddish tinted raw umber coloured ink of the other version was apparently preferred by George Clausen who used it for his own etchings. As Watson gave impressions of both types of inkings to his friends, it would seem that they pleased him equally.

John Payne was also pleased with Watson’s efforts. Upon receiving his first large allotment of impressions of *The Pioneer Mill*, he wrote on 27 March:

I have . . . the 26 Etchings of the Pioneer Mill – these etchings are extremely good and show an improvement on the small chaps – I am in hopes of doing something with them and have put them in the hands of Matthews who will frame up one for ‘show.’ The rest he will keep in hand and if I can work off a “phew” you bet I will – I am getting a good mount cut up for the framed chap so as to give it all the advantage possible but am afraid it will be a hard struggle to work off many of them.⁵⁴

In a postscript to this letter Payne noted that:

since writing the foregoing . . . I got the second batch of Etchings [of *The Pioneer Mill*] . . . The Etchings are very good and ought to go off. I can report some progress anyhow – I sold 3 of them for \$5 each just now . . . I thought it as well to that some [sic] on each – if they are not

worth that – why darn it they are nothing, I guess I shall have to let Matthews have them say at \$4 each. At any rate I have asked him to return \$5 but if they don't go for that figure they can be reduced – I hope to report further sales.⁵⁵

As Watson did not follow Payne's request to include a credit line noting the Royal sanction, Payne planned to have a card printed up which was to read: "Just Published / 'The Pioneer Mill' / Artist's Etching by / Homer Watson R.C.A. / From the painting at Windsor Castle by / permission of Her Majesty the Queen." This text was duly printed on a sheet of paper.⁵⁶ A few days later Payne could report: "I have sold one more of the Etchings to Charlie Nelson for \$5 so 4 have gone at that figure . . . Matthews have pawned off a couple of them and they look very well indeed. And I hope it will be the means of working off a few of them. I enclose the card I had printed. It looks O.K. and this ought to have an effect to sell some."⁵⁷ There is no further word from Payne regarding sales of *The Pioneer Mill* and apparently it was never advertised.

The only other known attempt to place Watson's etchings before the public was undertaken by his sister Phoebe at Doon. She received impressions of the small etchings as well as *The Pioneer Mill* around the end of March and began to give a few away to family and friends. She wrote to her brother telling him of a Mr. MacDonald who was opening a "picture shop" nearby. "Mr. MacDonald thought he could sell some etchings if he had them. I would send him one of these we have here but I do not know what price to put on it if you would send some out to me and give the prices I will send them up."⁵⁸ Apparently nothing came of this. Of the approximately fifty impressions Watson pulled of *The Pioneer Mill*, a handful are known to have sold and, to date, only eight impressions of the final state have been identified – seven of which have a provenance tracing them as gifts to friends from the artist or his sister.

Why did Watson's etching of *The Pioneer Mill* fail to meet the expectations of the artist, his patrons, and his dealer? One could say it was his dealer's lack of experience at promoting artist's etchings. In fact, Payne seemed confused as to exactly what market he was trying to reach. He presented the work as a prestigious limited edition artist's print but the reference to the Royal sanction suggested that it was a relatively inexpensive reproductive engraving of a painting in Queen Victoria's collection. Watson, on the other hand, seemed to understand perfectly well what he had made. By not including the printed credit line of the Royal warrant, as both Payne and James Kerr-Lawson had recommended, by printing the plate himself, and by signing each impression of the final edition, Watson placed his print firmly in the category

of those limited edition painter-etcher prints made by a distinguished class of artists, such as Clausen and Whistler.

However, Watson did bend to the North American preference to indicate this higher quality etching by inscribing on some of the impressions “Artist’s Proof” at some time after the edition was signed, but never in a consistent manner. For example, of four known impressions with this inscription, they can be found in the upper right corner, the lower left corner, or on the back. And only later did Watson inscribe the Royal credit line in the margins of the impression he gave to Lucius O’Brien (private collection), while a state two impression (National Gallery of Canada) he inscribed possibly in the 1930s with the title and incorrectly dated it as printed in “1888.”

Presented as neither fish nor fowl, only four impressions of *The Pioneer Mill* are known to have been sold by Payne while Matthews & Bro. only sold “a couple.”⁵⁹ Furthermore, it is not known if Payne attempted to place some impressions on consignment with William Scott in Montreal: Scott handled prints by artists such as Watson, and Payne did have a business relationship with him.⁶⁰ However, the failure to sell more was most likely caused by the chief factor so clearly stated by both Payne and Matthews – the print’s lack of competitiveness in a market already swamped with the cheap imports of engravings and etchings mass-produced for the North American market. Reducing the price of Watson’s prints was the dealers’ solution but this in turn eliminated whatever hope Watson had for something that would be a significant generator of income.

In order to compete in this market, Watson could have adopted the same tack as T. Mower Martin. Martin sold at least two of his etching plates to the New York dealer-publisher Christian Klackner but apparently Watson never entertained the idea of capitulating in this manner. Possibly it was his desire to continue as a self-sufficient painter-etcher that took priority; he was after all considering purchasing a second-hand etching press and bringing it back to Doon.⁶¹ Another factor had to be the exorbitant Canadian custom duty on all imported prints, which was already affecting Watson’s meagre profits on the prints he pulled himself in England. These customs duties were singled out as the major factor in crippling the efforts of the only Canadian artists’ etching society, the Association of Canadian Etchers.⁶²

All these factors surely worked against the success of *The Pioneer Mill*, but in the final analysis, the Etching Revival had very little support in Canada. No institutions, whether public galleries or artists societies, paid much attention to printmaking. Collectors were few and far between. Ironically, within days of Payne receiving the first large shipment of *The Pioneer Mill*, a proposal to revive the Association of Canadian Etchers was announced.⁶³ Nothing came of it. Unable to muster enough artists interested in printmaking and

lacking master printers in Canada, Canadian painter-etchers could not produce quality prints to compete with the American imports. In fact, even in the United States where the Etching Revival was such a success, it was languishing by 1890, a victim of its own popularity. Dealer-publishers had responded to the public craze for etching by furnishing inexpensive mass-produced artist's etchings that had seduced even the members of the New York Etching Club who had made a determined stand to banish these prints from their exhibitions. In 1893 the Club, which had been the standard bearer for the movement in North America, ceased to exist after it held its last exhibition. Throughout North America, the Etching Revival went into hibernation until the first decade of the twentieth century.

Returning to Canada, Watson brought his etched plates with him. But without access to a press in the small community of Doon and finding little, if any, interest in the Canadian market of the 1890s, Watson put aside his aspirations as a painter-etcher. A few impressions of *The Pioneer Mill* were given away to friends such as Lucius O'Brien, J.W.H. Watts and Professor James Mavor. Of the five small etchings, Watson probably printed editions of no more than ten impressions which were also apparently given away.⁶⁴ Watson never exhibited his prints and on the two occasions when they were placed in art shows, his friends entered them: James Mavor at the *Fifth Loan Exhibition* organized by the Art Museum of Toronto in 1912 and George Reid at the May 1936 exhibition of the Society of Canadian Painter-Etchers and Engravers.⁶⁵

Addendum – The Restrikes

Homer Watson's etched plates have been in private hands for some fifty years and over that period several posthumous editions of restrikes have been pulled from the plates, particularly *The Pioneer Mill*. Watson's own printings can be easily distinguished from the restrikes. To begin with, Watson preferred brown inks and, in the case of *The Pioneer Mill*, he signed his prints in brown ink below the plate mark at lower right simply as *Homer Watson*. As an inexperienced printer, Watson's pulls of his small etchings tend to be relatively clumsy to our contemporary taste with so-called problems such as ink residue along the edges of the plates. The restrikes were printed by experienced printers; they are in black ink and a late twentieth-century style with wide clean margins and smoothly inked and cleanly wiped plates.

In 1952, Nicholas Hornyansky was asked to pull some restrikes from the plates for *Landscape with Oak Trees* (titled by Hornyansky as "The Oak Trees") and *Hay Ricks* (titled by Hornyansky as "Trees in a Meadow"), as well as *The Pioneer Mill*. They were printed in editions of five to ten impressions.⁶⁶

They were signed, in pencil, below the plate: *Hornyanky Impr. Homer Watson Engr.* The restrikes examined were printed in black with a rich use of plate tone on a cream coloured thick wove paper with clean and generous margins.

In 1967, a second owner of the plate for *The Pioneer Mill* asked Fred Hagan to pull a restrike. He pulled just one impression, which he inscribed below the plate mark: *HOMER WATSON-ENG FH IMP, O.C.A. DEC 8 – 1967*. Hagan then passed the job on to Tom La Pierre who pulled an edition of twenty, printed in black on Japanese vellum. La Pierre inscribed his restrikes: lower left, *La Pierre Imp.* and lower right, *Homer Watson Engr.*⁶⁷

A fourth restrike of *The Pioneer Mill* has recently appeared on the market and has not been examined by the author. It was illustrated in Joyner's Canadian Art auction of 29 November 2006 as lot 472 and was subsequently withdrawn from the sale. The inscription, in an unknown hand, is described simply as: lower left, *The Pioneer Mill*; and lower right, *Homer Watson Engr.*

NOTES

- 1 For a thorough discussion of this aspect of printmaking in the Etching Revival, see David G. WRIGHT, "American Reproductive and Replica Etchings: Reflections on the Deluxe Auction Catalogues of the 1880s," *Imprint. Journal of the American Historical Print Collectors Society* 29:1 (Spring 2004): 14–33.
- 2 For a brief history of the Etching Revival in Europe and the United States of America see: Rosemarie L. TOVELL, "Introduction" in *A New Class of Art. The Artist's Print in Canadian Art, 1877–1920* (Ottawa, ON: National Gallery of Canada, 1996), 25–31.
- 3 Thirty-three of the two hundred and sixty-five works listed in the catalogue were described as either drawings or oils.
- 4 James Spooner to Homer Watson, Toronto, 1 Apr. [1885]; 30 Nov. 1885; and 6 Dec. [1885]. *Homer Watson Fonds*, National Gallery of Canada (hereafter HWF, NGC).
On 30 November, Spooner wrote: "You have hit on the Etching – of all of them, the best is landscape and it is yours – with pleasure and on your own terms . . . I shall put it out of sight at once." On 6 December Spooner wrote: "You made no reference to the Etching laid aside for you, in your last letter." Spooner is not known to have been a dealer in prints but he knew several of the people involved with the Association of Canadian Etchers and he kept tabs on the sales of etchings from the show.
- 5 J.W.H. Watts to Homer Watson, Ottawa, 24 July 1888. *Homer Watson Collection*, Douglas Library, Queen's University, Kingston.
- 6 *Second Black and White Exhibition, Etchings*, May 1888. Art Association of Montreal, unpaginated.
- 7 Homer Watson to Mortimer Lamb, Doon, 29 Mar. 1909. *Mortimer Lamb Papers*, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.

- 8 Dennis REID, *Our Own Country Canada* (Ottawa: NGC, 1979), 250. Reid gives the dates for Watson's employment at the firm as 1874–75. Further study by Brian Foss suggests that Watson was only given studio space at the photographic studio.
- 9 For a full discussion of Watson's painting, the reader is referred to Brian FOSS's essay "Homer Watson's *The Pioneer Mill*," forthcoming in *Journal of Canadian Art History/Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien*.
- 10 *The Canadian Illustrated News* XXI:18 (1 May 1880), 285.
- 11 Kevin O'BRIEN, *Oscar Wilde in Canada* (Toronto: Personal Library, 1982), 103–5.
- 12 Homer Watson to James Spooner, Maidenhead, 27 Aug. 1887. *T.R. Lee Collection*, Art Gallery of Ontario Archives.
- 13 Frank GIBSON, "The Etchings and Lithographs of George Clausen, R.A.," *The Print-Collector's Quarterly* 8:2 (July 1921): 202–27.
- 14 Roxanne Watson to Phoebe Watson, Maidenhead, 1 Jan. 1888. HWF, NGC.
- 15 Oscar Wilde to Homer Watson, [London] 15 Feb. 1888. Reprinted in MINER, Muriel Miller, *Homer Watson, the man of Doon* (Toronto: Summerhill Press, 1988 [revised edition of Muriel MILLER, Toronto: Ryerson Press 1938]), 48.
- 16 Roxanne Watson to Phoebe and Mrs Watson, London, 8 Apr. 1888, and 1 July 1888. HWF, NGC.
- 17 Marquis of Lorne to Homer Watson, Kensington Palace, London, 11 and 14 June 1888. HWF, NGC.
- 18 Roxanne Watson to Phoebe and Mrs. Watson, London, 16 June 1888. HWF, NGC.
- 19 Roxanne Watson to Phoebe and Mrs. Watson, London, 12 July 1888. HWF, NGC.
- 20 "Painting Sir John A. Macdonald's Portrait," *Saturday Night* 42:32 (25 June 1927): 2; and Roxanne Watson to Phoebe and Mrs. Watson, 12 July 1888. HWF, NGC.
- 21 J.W.H. Watts to Homer Watson, Ottawa, 24 July 1888. *Homer Watson Collection*, Douglas Library, Queen's University.
- 22 Fragment of a letter from Roxanne Watson to Phoebe and Mrs Watson, Maidenhead, c. 20 Oct. 1889. HWF, NGC.
- 23 Roxanne Watson to Phoebe Watson, Maidenhead, 7 Oct. 1889, reprinted in Frank E. PAGE, *Homer Watson, artist and man* (Kitchener: Commercial Printing Co., [1939]), 154–5. Watson's letter to Lorne written that first week in October 1889 is reprinted in MINER, *Homer Watson*, 37.
- 24 The quote is reprinted in PAGE, *Homer Watson*, 130 and is part of a letter fragment written by Roxanne Watson to Phoebe and Mrs. Watson, 20 Oct. 1889. HWF, NGC.
- 25 Roxanne Watson to Phoebe Watson? [Cookham Dene, early December 1889], reprinted in MINER, *Homer Watson*, 38, and Jane VANEVERY, *With faith, ignorance and delight, Homer Watson*, [Doon, On], Homer Watson Trust, 1967, 20.
- 26 Phoebe Watson to Homer and Roxanne Watson, Doon, 16 Jan. 1889 [sic read 1890]. HWF, NGC. Phoebe noted that, "those etchings you sent are from some of the black and white drawings Homer took with him aren't they. They look very familiar at all events . . ."
- 27 James Kerr-Lawson to Homer Watson, Pittenweem, 11 Jan. 1890, and after 11 Jan. 1890. *Homer Watson Collection*, Douglas Library, Queen's University; and Phoebe Watson to Homer and Roxanne Watson, 16 Jan. 1889 [sic, read 1890]. HWF, NGC.
- 28 It should be noted that no drawing in the National Gallery of Canada's extensive holdings of Watson ink drawings is directly related to any of his etchings.
- 29 Kerr-Lawson to Watson, Pittenweem, after 11 Jan. 1890. *Homer Watson Collection*, Douglas Library, Queen's University.

- 30 We cannot be certain if Kerr-Lawson received an impression of each of the five small etching subjects. From his correspondence only one can be identified. Phoebe received four small plate subjects in January and confirmed this number in her letter to Homer Watson, 26 Feb. 1890. HWF, NGC (the letter is incorrectly dated as 1889). The fifth small subject, while not described, is most likely *Landscape with Oak Trees*, which arrived in Doon, Ontario, by 9 April 1890, Phoebe Watson to Homer Watson. HWF, NGC.
- 31 Alan D. McNAIRN, *Behold the Hero. General Wolfe & the Arts in the Eighteenth Century* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 148 and 151; and Alan D. McNAIRN, "Benjamin West and the Death of General Wolfe," *The Magazine Antiques* 150 (November 1996): 678–85.
- 32 *The Quebec Gazette/La Gazette de Québec*, 9 Sept. 1790.
- 33 *The Quebec Mercury*, 12, 18, 20, 23, 25 Aug. and 5 Sept. 1831.
- 34 *For 1830 A Catalogue of Engravings by the most esteemed artists*, Bourne Depository of Arts, New York, Grattan Printers, 22 Wall Street, 1830.
- 35 Scott organized its first known sale of prints in 1862. See Hélène SICOTTE, "Le rôle de la vente publique dans l'essor du commerce d'art à Montréal au XIX^e siècle. Le cas de W. Scott & Sons ou comment le marchand d'art supplantait l'encanteur," *Journal of Canadian Art History/Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien* XXIII:1 & 2 (2002): 6–33. In his advertisement in the *General Directory for the City of Toronto & Gazetteer . . . for 1866*, Henry J. Matthews presented himself as a "picture frame manufacturer" and seller of "English and American Engravings, Lithographs &c." The Matthews Art Gallery, the successor to Henry Matthews's establishment, advertised the store as founded in 1861. 1902 *Toronto Industrial Exhibition Fine Arts Department* (advertisement on inside cover, T.I.E. exhibition catalogue).
- 36 Gladys ENGEL LANG and Kurt LANG, *Etched in Memory. The Building and Survival of Artistic Reputation* (Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 44. The author cannot find a reference which states the actual edition of this etching, but Haden's profits and the continuing availability of the print suggest that the edition was well into the hundreds if not more.
- 37 *Thirteenth Annual Spring Exhibition*, Art Association of Montreal, 1892. W. Scott & Son's advertisement notes that they are "Importers of Important Works of Art, Fine Engravings, Etchings, Etc." 1891 *Toronto Industrial Exhibition, Fine Arts Department* (unpaginated exhibition catalogue). In their advertisement, Matthews Brothers describes themselves as "Importers of High Class Works of Art, Originals, Engravings, Etchings . . ."
- 38 In his account book for his 1884–85 trip to New York (*Thomas Mower Martin Fonds*, Glenbow Museum Archives), T. Mower Martin notes the sale of two of his etching plates at \$100 and \$125. These were published by Klackner with the titles "Among the Pines" and "In the Adirondacks." They are listed in Klackner's catalogue of American Etchings, Christian KLACKNER, *Klackner's American Etchings, Published and Copyrighted by C. Klackner* (New York: C. Klackner, 1888), 30. The printer's proofs are in the collection of the Parish Art Museum, Southampton, NY, Dunnigan Collection 76.I.347 and 76.I.348.
- 39 Christian KLACKNER, *Proofs and prints, engravings and etchings; how they are made, their grades, qualities and values, and how to select them* (New York: C. Klackner, 1884), preface.

- 40 KLACKNER, *Klackner's American Etchings*, publisher's notice.
- 41 Remarque proofs have a small drawing or symbol in the margins; painter-etchers used them to test the degree of biting by the acid before the entire plate was immersed in the acid bath. By the final state these remarques were burnished out. In the late nineteenth century, artists such as Felix Buhot retained the remarques as significant features of their prints.
- 42 KLACKNER, *Proofs and prints*, 14.
- 43 Frederick KEPPEL, *What Etchings Are, a manual of elementary information for beginners* (New York: Frederick Keppel & Co., 1888), unpaginated.
- 44 Frederick KEPPEL, *Illustrated Catalogue of Etchings by American Artists for sale by Frederick Keppel & Co.* (New York: Frederick Keppel & Co., [1908]), 54–5.
- 45 Although it would take time, it was Keppel and his ilk that helped define the artist's print as we understand it today. Keppel's sales catalogues, which provided his clients with biographical details and full descriptive information on the prints, became the models of connoisseurship. Most catalogues were devoted to a single artist and authored by a leading authority and they were the best resource publications of their time. Keppel's publications and, in particular, his *Print-collector's Bulletin*, published in sixteen parts in 1908, were the predecessors of *The Print Collector's Quarterly* which he began to publish in 1911. This publication was his most significant contribution to the study of printmaking, serving as the bible for all serious art collectors and scholars until it ceased publication in 1950. Keppel's importance to Canada rested not only with the Canadian clients he served, but probably most significantly, it was his generosity as a lender to some of the most important Canadian print exhibitions in Montreal, Toronto, and Halifax. (*Second Black and White Exhibition*, Art Association of Montreal, May 1888; *Third Exhibition of Works in Black and White*, Art Association of Montreal, January–February 1907; *Fifth Loan Exhibition*, Art Museum of Toronto, April 1912; and the *Nova Scotia Provincial Exhibition*, Halifax, September 1913.)
- 46 A search through Toronto city directories proved unhelpful to making any further identification.
- 47 John Payne to Homer Watson, Toronto, 21 Oct. 1889. HWF, NGC.
- 48 Of the two brothers, Henry J. Matthews and William L. Matthews, Henry seems to have been the most interested in the art side of their business. Henry J. Matthews began as a picture framer, opening his shop on Yonge Street in 1861. By 1866 the business was listed at 93 Yonge Street and by 1873 he was joined by his brother William L. Matthews when the firm was known as Matthews & Bro. Around 1891 William's son Henry L. Matthews entered the business and the name was changed to Matthews Bros. & Co. In 1896, Henry J. Matthews apparently sold his part of the framing business to his brother who set up shop as Matthews Bros & Co. on Temperance Street with his three sons. Henry J. Matthews, in turn, continued at the Yonge Street venue as H.J. Matthews, specializing as an importer of "High Class Art" as well as specialty picture framing. By 1902, Henry had retired and sold his gallery, now called Matthews Art Gallery, to John Mackenzie and Walter G. Haynes while the Temperance Street framing business was now known as Matthews Bros. Limited (References: Toronto City Directories 1866–1902).
- 49 John Payne to Homer Watson, Toronto, 4 Nov. 1889. HWF, NGC.
- 50 Ibid.

- 51 John Payne to Homer Watson, Toronto, 2 Mar. 1890. HWF, NGC.
- 52 John Payne to Homer Watson, Toronto, 2 Mar. 1890, 12 Mar. 1890. HWF, NGC.
- 53 John Payne to Homer Watson, Toronto, 27 Mar. 1890. HWF, NGC.
- 54 John Payne to Homer Watson, Toronto, 2 Mar. 1890, 27 Mar. 1890. HWF, NGC.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 One sheet has survived in Watson Sketchbook F, National Gallery of Canada. The sheet is illustrated in TOVELL, *A New Class of Art*, 71. It is interesting to note that James Kerr-Lawson had a similar idea when he wrote to Watson in January 1890: “your Pioneer Mill printed and ‘by permission of Her Majesty’ etc. printed or engraved on the border will set you up – here as well as elsewhere.” (undated letter), *Homer Watson Collection*, Douglas Library, Queens University.
- 57 John Payne to Homer Watson, Toronto, 1 Apr. 1890. HWF, NGC.
- 58 Phoebe Watson to Homer and Roxanne Watson, Doon, 6 May 1890. HWF, NGC.
- 59 John Payne to Homer Watson, Toronto, 1 Apr. 1890. HWF, NGC.
- 60 Payne’s correspondence with Homer Watson shows that he and Scott kept in touch, visiting each other’s galleries. On a visit to Toronto in late November or early December 1889, Scott even took a Watson painting with him to Montreal on consignment. (John Payne to Homer Watson, Toronto, 2 Dec. 1889. HWF, NGC.) Scott was acting as the Canadian agent for Stephen Parrish of Philadelphia selling Parrish’s etchings from 1882 through to 1887 at his Montreal establishment. (Ref: Stephen Parrish Account Book, entries for 1 and 16 Dec. 1882; 2 Jan., 11 May, 22 Nov., and 6 Dec. 1883; 12 Jan., April, 3 May 1884; and 24 Jan. and 22 Nov. 1887) *Parrish Family Papers*, Free Library of Philadelphia. [Archives of American Art, roll 4409, p. 46 to end]
- 61 John Payne to Homer Watson, Toronto, 12 Mar. 1890. HWF, NGC. This was possibly E.J. Gregory’s press which Watson had been using. The cost was \$8 and Payne encouraged Watson to buy it, even offering to raise the money. Watson did not buy it.
- 62 TEMPLAR, “Art Notes,” *The Week* 7:17 (28 Mar. 1890): 268.
- 63 Ibid.
- 64 Payne mentions framing up “six sets” of the small prints for the OSA portfolio (John Payne to Homer Watson, Toronto, 2 March 1890. HWF, NGC). James Kerr-Lawson received at least one of each and Phoebe Watson at least two of each.
- 65 Two of the prints exhibited at the Canadian Society of Painter-Etchers and Engravers (CPE) are in the NGC collection. *Hay Ricks* and *Faggot Gatherer* were acquired from Watson’s estate. They bear Reid’s inscription noting their exhibition history. Reid was President of the CPE at the time and may have persuaded Watson to enter the prints. They would have been on display just weeks before Watson died.
- 66 Information on the Hornyansky restrikes provided by Mrs. Hornyansky to Ian Carter, McMichael Canadian Collection, and passed on to the author (1 Mar. 1984).
- 67 Karl Hagan to the author, Newmarket, ON, 17 Dec. 1997, copy in author’s files. The information came from Fred Hagan. The author catalogued both the Hagan restrike and the La Pierre restrike at Fred Hagan’s home in December 1997.

The Pioneer Mill d'Homer Watson. La création et la mise en marché d'une estampe originale au cours de l'*Etching Revival* canadien

ROSEMARIE L. TOVELL

En 1890, alors qu'il résidait en Angleterre, Homer Watson (1855–1936) réalisa une reproduction à l'eau-forte de son tableau le plus connu, *The Pioneer Mill*, qui était accroché au château de Windsor. Il entreprit le processus de l'estampe du début à la fin, en faisant d'abord un dessin du tableau, puis en gravant et en imprimant la planche en tirage limité sur une presse manuelle. En termes de l'estampe originale, à l'époque, il s'agissait d'un procédé hybride, en partie reproduction et en partie œuvre d'artiste – un aspect assez commun de l'estampe connu sous le nom de « réplique ». Les répliques constituaient un aspect important du renouveau de l'eau-forte (*Etching Revival*), mouvement qui a vu le jour au XIX^e siècle chez les artistes qui voulaient se réapproprier l'estampe, et particulièrement l'eau-forte, comme médium de création. En tant qu'expression du travail de l'artiste dans un autre médium, les répliques étaient cataloguées dans la catégorie des gravures telle que définie à cette époque. *The Pioneer Mill* de Watson a été la tentative la plus ambitieuse d'un artiste canadien de créer une eau-forte de la plus haute qualité esthétique. En théorie, elle aurait dû lui valoir d'être reconnu au pays comme l'un des meilleurs peintres-graveurs du Canada et se révéler une lucrative entreprise commerciale. Malheureusement, il n'en fut rien. Malgré tout, la réalisation de *The Pioneer Mill* offre un coup d'œil singulier sur la création et la mise en marché d'une estampe originale à l'époque de l'*Etching Revival* canadien.

Homer Watson exposa son tableau, *The Pioneer Mill*, lors de la première exposition de la Royal Canadian Academy, en mars 1880, où il fut acheté par le marquis de Lorne, gouverneur général du Canada, qui en fit cadeau à sa belle-mère, la reine Victoria. C'était une reconnaissance et un honneur sans précédent pour un artiste canadien. Après la chaleureuse réception de son travail à la *Indian and Colonial Exhibition* de Londres, en 1886, Watson pouvait espérer faire carrière outre-mer et il s'embarqua pour l'Angleterre à l'été 1887.

Watson n'hésita pas à se familiariser avec le milieu artistique londonien. Il se lia d'amitié avec l'artiste George Clausen (1852–1944), dont le style et les scènes rurales étaient proches des siens. Au cours des deux années suivantes, certaines circonstances amenèrent Watson à envisager de reproduire *The Pioneer Mill* en gravure. Cependant Clausen, qui était également aquafortiste,

voyait que la manière de dessiner de Watson se rapprochait de l'eau-forte et il le persuada de graver le sujet à l'eau-forte. Watson sollicita et obtint l'appui de Lorne pour aller voir et copier son tableau au château de Windsor. Entre-temps, Clausen s'employa à résoudre la question de la presse à eau-forte en intervenant auprès de son voisin et artiste E.J. Gregory (1850–1909) pour qu'il loue sa maison, déjà équipée d'une presse. Sitôt installé, Watson commença à s'initier à l'eau-forte sous la tutelle de Clausen. De décembre 1889 à janvier 1890, il fit cinq petites eaux-fortes, chacune le faisant progresser dans la compréhension des propriétés du médium afin de mieux reproduire sa manière de dessiner.

Watson entreprit l'eau-forte de *The Pioneer Mill* en janvier et février 1890, réalisant au moins les deux premiers états de l'estampe. Le premier état, sans doute très semblable au dessin réalisé au château de Windsor, était une image très complète, avec des lignes mordues profondément dans le bain d'acide. Dans le deuxième état, Watson a adouci la rudesse du premier en y introduisant des éléments d'ombre, donnant au sujet plus d'atmosphère et de profondeur. L'état final, probablement produit en mars, comportait quelques éléments de plus, mais le changement le plus important fut l'utilisation d'un voile d'encre, résidus laissés sur la planche, pour donner à l'estampe la tonalité d'un tableau.

Watson envoya toutes ces estampes à son marchand de Toronto, John Payne, qui n'avait pas beaucoup d'expérience dans la vente de gravures. Les problèmes de Payne étaient en outre aggravés par l'état du marché canadien.

Depuis que les premières gravures avaient commencé à se vendre au Canada, à la fin du XVIII^e siècle, les reproductions gravées importées d'Angleterre et de New York avaient dominé le marché jusque dans les années 1890. Certaines de ces gravures étaient de la plus haute qualité et prisées par les collectionneurs. Avec l'émergence du *Etching Revival* et la popularité et le prestige des estampes originales, les marchands/éditeurs commencèrent à réquisitionner les eau-fortes. Après avoir acheté les planches gravées de l'artiste, ces marchands/éditeurs, tels Christian Klackner de New York, les faisaient imprimer en tirages soi-disant limités à des prix variés selon la manière dont elles étaient faites. On faisait appel à l'investisseur qui pouvait acheter une œuvre d'art pour aussi peu que cinquante cents. On vendait aussi bien les reproductions gravées que les eaux-fortes et elles envahissaient le marché canadien où elles étaient vendues par des marchands d'art établis tels William Scott, à Montréal, et Henry J. Matthews, à Toronto.

La confusion du marché était accrue par l'émergence de marchands comme Frederick Keppel, à New York, qui s'était donné pour mission de présenter les eaux-fortes comme un véritable médium artistique – un médium de création produit par l'imagination et la main de l'artiste – c'est à

dire, l'estampe originale. Ce sont des marchands comme Keppel, travaillant avec une expertise émergente de l'estampe, qui ont commencé à classer les estampes à tirage limité telles que nous les comprenons aujourd'hui. Pour ajouter à la confusion du collectionneur, des éditeurs à la Klackner commencèrent à utiliser la terminologie et les pratiques des beaux-arts, comme « épreuves », tirages limités numérotés et signatures d'artistes. C'est dans ces conditions que Payne a tenté de comprendre les eaux-fortes que Watson lui a envoyées en mars 1890.

Pour l'aider à commercialiser les estampes de Watson, Payne fit appel aux conseils d'Henry Matthews. Le résultat fut qu'il réduisit considérablement les premières évaluations de Watson pour accorder les eaux-fortes à une échelle de prix à la Klackner. À cause de la faible demande pour l'estampe, on demanda à Watson d'en imprimer un tirage de cinquante. Cependant, pour souligner la qualité artistique de *The Pioneer Mill*, Watson signa simplement chaque tirage à la plume et inscrivit sur quelques-unes « épreuve d'artiste » (*Artist's Proof*). Watson ne voulait ni titre ni légende sur la marge inférieure de l'eau-forte. De sa propre initiative, Payne imprima des cartes pour accompagner les eaux-fortes avec toutes les légendes requises. Ces tiraillements entre le marchand et l'artiste eurent pour résultat que l'œuvre se retrouva dans une sorte de limbes.

Il y a plusieurs raisons pour l'insuccès commercial de l'estampe. Elle ne pouvait soutenir la concurrence dans un marché déjà envahi par l'importation de masse de produits bon marché. Il n'y avait pas d'appui, au Canada, de la part des collectionneurs ou des institutions, pour un *Etching Revival* local. Le gouvernement canadien étouffait de plus tout espoir d'un tel renouveau en imposant des droits de douane exorbitants sur les gravures et les estampes importées pour la vente ou l'exposition. Pourtant, au bout du compte, une des raisons les plus importantes était qu'elle arrivait au mauvais moment. En 1890, l'*Etching Revival* en Amérique du nord languissait. Le marché s'était effondré tout comme les principales sociétés des peintre-graveurs tel le porte-étendard nord-américain, le New York Etching Club. Dans toute l'Amérique du nord, l'*Etching Revival* s'est mis en hibernation jusqu'à la première décennie du xx^e siècle.

Traduction : Élise Bonnette