

# The Redemption of the *Arkansas Traveler*

LOUISE HANCOX

The term “Arkansas Traveler” is ubiquitous in popular culture within the state of Arkansas. It calls to mind a university newspaper, a baseball team, a certificate bestowed upon famous visitors to the state, or even a tomato. Many Arkansas residents are not familiar with the history of the expression and the equivocal opinions it has produced over the past 150 years. The story behind the expression is one worth telling, one worth reclaiming in the history of Arkansas. In the 1850s, Arkansans knew that the “Arkansas Traveler” was a story, with musical accompaniment, popularized by Arkansas native Sandy Faulkner. By 1858, another Arkansan, Edward Payson Washbourne, had produced a painting based upon Faulkner’s tale. The story and this painting engendered excitement and optimism in 1858. Yet less than thirty years later it produced shame, embarrassment, and despair. The painting, at first a source of state pride, was, by the turn of the twentieth century, blamed for sullyng the image of Arkansas and discouraging immigration and investment. One early twentieth-century author noted:

Perhaps no other State in the Union has been so misrepresented as Arkansas. She has had much bad advertising, and the ignorant beyond her borders have wrong ideas of her and her people. By such people she is supposed to be the home of shiftless squatters, robbers, and cutthroats, who make the bowie-knife and the pistol the law of the land . . . The story of

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“The Arkansas Traveler” is largely responsible for the wrong impression of our State.<sup>1</sup>

The placement of such a burden upon the *Arkansas Traveler* is not limited to early twentieth century authors. Historian Mary Hudgins would agree almost sixty years later, insisting that it was “Sandy Faulkner and Edward Washburn, with the complicity of Messrs. Currier and Ives, who must bear the brunt of having pilloried their state, and held it up to 100 years of ridicule before the nation.”<sup>2</sup>

What these authors fail to consider is that Arkansas had a poor reputation before the *Arkansas Traveler* became popular. Arkansas had been known as the land of shiftless squatters, robbers, and cutthroats for many years before Edward Washbourne created his most famous piece. When Washbourne took brush to canvas in 1856, he believed he was creating a painting. In actuality, he was creating a mirror for the state of Arkansas. When Arkansas looked in this mirror in the late 1850s, economic conditions were good, and it would see in the painting a charming and humorous rendition of the past created by a talented native artist. By the time criticism of the painting peaked around 1895, economic conditions had deteriorated remarkably. When Arkansans held up the mirror in 1895, they saw in the painting not the past but an all too alarming present where the image of the squatter was more relevant than ever. Where once Arkansans saw three figures when looking at the painting—the impoverished squatter, the wealthy traveler, and the talented artist—by 1895 many Arkansans could see only the impoverished squatter.

Though the definite origins of the Arkansas Traveler story are not fully known, most historians agree that the tale was popularized by Arkansan Sanford Faulkner.<sup>3</sup> Faulkner, who was born in Kentucky in the first decade of the nineteenth century, moved to Arkansas around 1830 and became a successful plantation owner in the southeastern part of the state. He took an active interest in politics and received an appoint-

<sup>1</sup>John Hugh Reynolds, *Makers of Arkansas History* (New York: Silver, Burdett and Co., 1911), 275.

<sup>2</sup>Mary D. Hudgins, “Arkansas’s ‘Traveler’—Who Really Dreamed Him Up?” *Arkansas Gazette* August 29, 1965.

<sup>3</sup>For more on the origins of the story and its accompanying music and differing claimants to its authorship, see Mary D. Hudgins, “The Arkansas Traveler: A Multi-Patented Wayfarer,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 30 (Summer 1971): 144-160.

ment as a commissioner for Chicot County in 1838. In 1840, he moved his household to Little Rock while retaining his considerable assets in Chicot County. Various accounts of his life have described him as a fun-loving, jovial character who loved to fish and hunt and would spend countless hours wandering in the woods. He would then frequent the public gathering places in town, play his favorite game of billiards for hours, imbibe freely at the bars, and entertain the admiring crowds with hilarious accounts of his adventures.<sup>4</sup>

Faulkner's most famous adventure was that known as the "Arkansas Traveler." Upon his death in 1874, his daughter recounted the story:

It was well known throughout the southwest that Col. Faulkner was the original personator of the "Arkansas Traveler," and it was his pride to be known as such. The story, it is said, was founded on a little incident which occurred in the campaign of 1840, when he made his tour of the state in company with the Hon. A. H. Sevier, Gov. Fulton, Chester Ashley and Gov. Yell. One day, in the Boston Mountains, the party approached a squatter's for information of the route, and Col. "Sandy" was made spokesman of the company and it was upon his witty responses the story and tune were founded. On the return to Little Rock, a grand banquet was given in the famous "bar-room" which used to stand near the Anthony house and Col. "Sandy" was called upon to play the tune and tell the story. Afterward it grew in popularity. When he subsequently went to New Orleans, the fame of the "Arkansas Traveler" had gone before him, and at a banquet, amid clinking glasses and brilliant toasts, he was handed a violin by then governor of Louisiana, and requested to favour them with the favorite Arkansas tune. At the old St. Charles hotel a special room was devoted to his use, bearing in gilt letters over the door, "Arkansas Traveler."<sup>5</sup>

Faulkner was often requested to tell the tale at parties and banquets (for the version of the tale attributed to him by Washbourne, see Ap-

<sup>4</sup>Margaret Smith Ross, "Sanford C. Faulkner," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 14 (Summer 1985): 303.

<sup>5</sup>Obituary of Sandford Faulkner, *Arkansas Gazette*, August 5, 1874.

pendix). The story begins as the wealthy traveler is lost and comes across the cabin of the squatter. The traveler requests directions and also food and shelter from the squatter.<sup>6</sup> A witty exchange follows in which the squatter is reluctant to offer help. Despite his humble circumstances, it is the squatter who holds the power in this exchange. The traveler is dependent upon him for assistance. The squatter is playing the same tune over and over on his fiddle. When it is revealed that he does not know the end of the tune, the traveler takes the fiddle and completes the tune. The fiddler is so happy to hear the rest of the tune that he extends his hospitality to the traveler, inviting him to stay and to enjoy food and drink.<sup>7</sup> Despite appearances and modern notions of the lifestyles of these men, they would have had much in common in nineteenth-century Arkansas. They would have been able to build upon a common love of music with tales of guns, dogs, hunting, and fishing.

Sometime between 1856 and 1858, the story caught the interest of a young portrait painter named Edward Payson Washbourne.<sup>8</sup> Though born in present-day Oklahoma, his family moved to Benton County, Arkansas, when he was a child, and he always claimed to be a native Arkansan. Washbourne was the son of Cephas Washburn, a noted educator and missionary to the Indians who ensured that his sons had well-rounded educations. The elder Washburn especially wanted his children to love and enjoy classical literature. By all accounts, Edward was a talented student. According to one obituary, "He was a deep student. In early life he came to his recitations fully prepared. His studious habits never forsook him. He had a good retentive memory. He loved the classic page. He could repeat page after page of Virgil, or a whole oration from Cicero."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Squatting was a fairly common practice among the more humble settlers of the Ozarks and Ouachitas. Often times, families would settle and live on a piece of land for several years before filing a claim and receiving a deed. These squatters, who mostly relied on subsistence farming and hunting, often did not have the cash necessary to buy the property upon arrival or wanted to make sure that the land could support the family before paying for it.

<sup>7</sup>For more on the different versions of the Arkansas Traveler story, see James R. Masterson, *Tall Tales of Arkansaw* (Boston: Chapman and Grimes, 1942). Masterson's work remains the most detailed account of the Arkansas Traveler story.

<sup>8</sup>Edward chose the spelling Washbourne over the spelling Washburn that his father and other members of his family used. The literature about the painting often refers to him as Edward Washburn as well. Washbourne is used here as it was the version that Edward used on his business card and the advertisements for the lithograph.

<sup>9</sup>*Fayetteville Arkansian*, August 11, 1860.

Washbourne began to paint in 1851, gaining accolades as an amateur. Materials were hard to obtain and quite expensive. Lacking funds to buy paints, Edward became a teacher for a short while but soon gave it up, opened a studio, and began painting portraits. The *Arkansas Gazette* took notice of him in 1852, insisting that he was an artist of very considerable merit and boasting of his Arkansas roots. The editorial went on to assert, "we hope that he may be liberally patronized, by those possessing the means, and who feel disposed to encourage native talent in a worthy and deserving young man."<sup>10</sup> He was able to spend some time with and learn from a portrait painter named Harding in 1853.<sup>11</sup> As no school of art and very few artists lived in Arkansas at this time, he lived frugally and amassed enough money to travel to New York. He spent eighteen months studying under Charles Loring Elliott, the great American painter, and also at the Academy of Design where he was exposed to "the finest pictures of the western continent."<sup>12</sup> Undoubtedly these included the works of William Sidney Mount and other genre painters who were members of the Academy during this period.<sup>13</sup>

By 1855, Washbourne was back in Arkansas and establishing a name for himself as a portrait painter. The *Gazette* noted that he was in Little Rock and that "such of our citizens as are anxious to secure good likenesses, as well as to encourage a young man born and raised in Arkansas will doubtless call and see him."<sup>14</sup> In 1856, he was staying with Col. Ben Hawkins on Hawkins' plantation that was reported to be as large as 23,000 acres. Hawkins had commissioned Edward to paint six portraits of his family. In a letter to his brother, Edward calls Hawkins a "perfect Arkansas gentlemen and makes as much of me as if I were a prince."<sup>15</sup> Washbourne was clearly the darling of Arkansas at this time. No newspaper reference failed to boast of his Arkansas nativity.

<sup>10</sup>"Encourage Native Talent," *Arkansas Gazette*, November 12, 1852.

<sup>11</sup>*Arkansas Gazette*, May 12, 1860. Historian Michael Dougan, in an unpublished biography of William Quesenbury, suggests that this was Horace Harding, the brother of famed artist Chester Harding.

<sup>12</sup>Obituary of Edward Washbourne, *Fayetteville Arkansian*, April 11, 1860.

<sup>13</sup>Elizabeth Johns, *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

<sup>14</sup>*Arkansas Gazette*, March 2, 1855.

<sup>15</sup>Edward P. Washbourne to J. W. Washburn, July 6, 1856, Josiah Woodward Washburn Papers, microfilm edition, Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock.

Year after year, they reported similar statements of pride in his accomplishments but also in the fact that he was an Arkansan:

*In 1855:* Mr. W. besides being a young man of first rate professional talents and a gentleman in every sense of the word, has the additional claim on us of being a native of Arkansas.<sup>16</sup>

*In 1857:* Mr. W. besides being a young gentleman of a high order of professional talents, commends himself particularly to the citizens of Arkansas by being a native of the State.<sup>17</sup>

*In 1859:* Mr. W. is a young man of decided talent and worth and, as such, we are proud of him as a native son of Arkansas.<sup>18</sup>

That Arkansans would have pride in an emerging artist from the state is not surprising given the fact that there were those in the state who were already worrying about Arkansas's image in the rest of the country. Historian C. Fred Williams asserts that several factors had worked to develop Arkansas's image by the mid nineteenth century. During the period of heavy westward expansion, Arkansas was cut off from the main immigration paths. The state was blocked by the Ozark Mountains to the north, the Mississippi flood plain to the east, and the Indian Territory to the west. Historians agree that Arkansas became a state before she was ready. The low population and thus the insufficient tax base meant that maintaining law and order was a major problem from the start. No capital existed for internal building projects. Dueling remained a common method of solving political disputes, and residents of the state gained a reputation for violence. Furthermore, both of its banks had collapsed in the first years of statehood, causing outside capital to dry up and permanently tarnished its credit reputation among eastern bankers.<sup>19</sup>

Information about life in Arkansas during the early nineteenth century comes largely in the form of diaries of those visiting the state. Traveler Henry Rowe Schoolcraft came through Arkansas from Mis-

<sup>16</sup>*Arkansas Gazette*, December 21, 1855.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, July 18, 1857.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, January 8, 1859.

<sup>19</sup>C. Fred Williams, "The Bear State Image: Arkansas in the Nineteenth Century," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 39 (Summer 1980): 99-111.

souri in 1818. He would later publish his observations of the Wells family who lived on the White River, noting "in manners, morals, customs, dress, contempt of labor and hospitality, the state of society is not essentially different from that which exists among the savages."<sup>20</sup> George Featherstonhaugh, an English geologist, called the state a "sinkhold of crime and infamy" in an 1844 travel account that was widely circulated. He also complained of Arkansans' propensity for violence and their need to carry weapons, especially the Bowie knife.<sup>21</sup> The travel adventures of German Frederick Gerstaecker soon followed, rife with drunken, lazy yet often violent, backwoodsmen and their tales of bear hunting. Charles Mercer Noland and Thomas Bangs Thorpe helped to complete the image of Arkansas as a rugged state, populated by backwoodsmen untainted by civilization. Their stories were extremely popular, and the nation became fascinated with their frontier stories. In late 1849, an editorial in the *Arkansas Intelligencer* read:

People at a distance easily come to the conclusion that . . . a typical Arkansian is . . . a person in a semi-barbaric state, half alligator, half horse . . . armed to the teeth, bristling with knives and pistols, a rollicking daredevil type of personage, made up of coarseness, ignorance and bombast.<sup>22</sup>

That year, Edward Washbourne was sixteen years old and had yet to begin to paint.

By 1856, Washbourne had begun a new painting.<sup>23</sup> This time, it was not a portrait but instead a genre painting depicting the meeting between Sandford Faulkner and the squatter.<sup>24</sup> Why he chose this particular subject remains unclear. It does appear that he had an interest in

<sup>20</sup>S. Charles Bolton, *Arkansas, 1800-1860: Remote and Restless* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1998), 6.

<sup>21</sup>Williams, "Bear State Image," 103.

<sup>22</sup>*Van Buren Arkansas Intelligencer*, November 3, 1849.

<sup>23</sup>There is some debate about when it was that Washbourne began work on the painting. A letter to his brother dated 1856 suggests that had begun the painting but the obituary provided by his brother Henry notes Washbourne began the picture in 1858; E. P. Washbourne to J. W. Washburn, July 6, 1856; *Fayetteville Arkansian*, April 11, 1860.

<sup>24</sup>For an excellent discussion of the elements of the painting itself, see Sarah Brown, "The Arkansas Traveller: Southwest Humor on Canvas," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 46 (Winter 1987): 348-375.



Leopold Grozelier's lithograph. *Courtesy The Old Print Gallery, Washington, D.C.*

Arkansas folklore and southwest humor. His humorous retelling of a meeting between himself and an uneducated rural man was printed in the *Fayetteville Arkansian* and then reprinted in the 1854 *Spirit of the Times* published in New York.<sup>25</sup>

In 1859, Washbourne travelled to Boston to arrange for the painting to be reproduced as a lithograph by Leopold Grozelier who worked for J. H. Bufford and Sons. Washbourne was thorough in his desire to present the case of the *Arkansas Traveler*. His caption on the lithograph clearly designates the key players in his story: "The Arkansas Traveller, Designed by one of the natives and Dedicated to Col. S.C. Faulkner." The musical score is reproduced at the bottom of the lithograph with a double bar indicating the turn of the tune. Originally, this lithograph included a version of the *Arkansas Traveler* dialogue. Washbourne was

<sup>25</sup>Swanee Bennett and William B. Worthen, *Arkansas Made: A Survey of the Decorative, Mechanical and Fine Arts Produced in Arkansas, 1819-1870* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1991), 203-204.



very interested in making sure that his audience knew the key players and an accurate version of the story. The fact that Washbourne went to such trouble to mention Sandford Faulkner, refer to himself—the artist—as a native Arkansan, and include the full dialogue of the story illustrates his concern with Arkansas's image.

The painting and the subsequent lithograph were received with much enthusiasm in the state. Several newspapers carried announcements about the release of the lithograph. Again, the emphasis on pride in Washbourne as a native of Arkansas was a recurrent theme. The *Gazette* titled its notice "A Home Picture by a Home Artist" and boasted:

The subject, the home legend of the "Arkansaw Traveler," has ample justice done it by the artist, Mr. Washbourne, who is a native of the State. Those who would purchase a good picture, at which they can have a good laugh, and which will do for their children to keep, and laugh at, will do well to call at Reardon's book-store and make such a purchase.<sup>26</sup>

A piece in the *Arkansian* read:

the lithographs will soon be ready for sale to all those who desire a copy of the lithograph of the painting of the 'Arkansas Traveler' by one of Arkansas' gifted sons, and who desire to foster the native genius, talent and art of our state . . . it is wholly superfluous for us to urge any Arkansan to purchase a picture representing a scene familiar to every man, woman and child in the state . . . We know that the children of Arkansas will step up to assist a brother who is endeavoring to reflect honor upon his state in the works of art.<sup>27</sup>

The editor of the *Searcy Eagle* in December 1859 resolved that the picture should be hung in every parlor in Arkansas and that:

Mr. Washburn has shown in the painting that high order of talent as a historical painter which will soon place him in the first rank of his profession. Arkansas should be proud of him; and

<sup>26</sup> "A Home Picture by a Home Artist," *Arkansas Gazette*, December 3, 1859.

<sup>27</sup> *Fayetteville Arkansian*, September 16, 1859.

show that interest in his efforts which the young and adventurous artist knows well how to appreciate, and which he justly merits as well for private worth, as he now does for skill in his art.<sup>28</sup>

In his own time, Washbourne became a favored son of Arkansas because Arkansans hoped that his skill as an artist would help to counteract the negative image of Arkansas, not add to it. He himself was aware of the role he should play in the history of the state. Just as newspaper editorials stressed he was a talented artist and a native of the state, he had been careful to stress the fact that he was a native on the lithograph caption.

Washbourne was also concerned with maintaining the integrity of the Arkansas Traveler story. This is evidenced by his inclusion of the full dialogue with not only the lithograph but also in the January 1860 edition of the *Knickerbocker Magazine*, an influential literary magazine published in New York. The magazine had published a version of the Arkansas Traveler story in February 1859 that Washbourne objected to, albeit quite humorously. The *Knickerbocker's* 1859 version differs markedly from the one that Washbourne included on the lithography and paints both the traveler and the squatter in a less respectable manner. This version refers to the squatter in the tale as the "Arkansas Artist!"<sup>29</sup> In his letter to the magazine, Washbourne asserted:

in order that those "outside barbarians" who have not enjoyed opportunities of informing themselves correctly, or may have been misled by the representations of the afore-mentioned false history . . . . The "Arkansas Traveller" requested me (his painter in ordinary) before I left Arkansas to say to you that he is affronted, and demands justice . . . . By "justice" he mean that you should either present again the history to the public, worked up correctly from the facts before you, or that you should inform your readers where a correct statement may be found.

<sup>28</sup> *Searcy Eagle*, December 1859.

<sup>29</sup> *Knickerbocker Magazine*, March 1859, 315.

In his communication with the magazine, Washbourne included his version of the story (see Appendix) that the magazine did reprint in full with apologies to the artist and noted that they would not have done so if “the original with which he furnishes us were not a great deal more amusing than the synopsis sent to us several months ago by a South-western correspondent.”<sup>30</sup> Never again would the Arkansas Traveler story receive such a detailed and forceful defense.

At the time of the release of the lithograph in 1859, the state was experiencing a level of economic prosperity that it had never seen in its short history.<sup>31</sup> Cotton prices were high, and a writer to the *Arkansas State Gazette and Democrat*, expressing the sentiment shared by many, remarked, “If cotton will only hold present prices for five years, Arkansas planters will be as rich as cream a foot thick.”<sup>32</sup> The Little Rock newspapers commented on the surge of migrants to the state and beyond. “Emigrants for South Arkansas and Texas are crowding through our city thicker and faster than ever. The rush is tremendous. The two ferries are constantly engaged in crossing the movers.”<sup>33</sup> The railroads were beginning at last to lay track in the state. Though the economy was based upon agriculture, saw mills, tanneries, and cotton mills began to appear. Artisans across the state were beginning to produce fine products to rival their more experienced competitors from the east. Commercial centers began to appear along the state’s rivers, connected by steamboats. Despite a rough start and a lingering poor reputation, the future for Arkansas looked bright. When Arkansans of this era looked at Washbourne’s picture they were able to see the past in the form of the squatter as well as the future arriving brightly in the form of a well-dressed traveler upon a white horse.

Tragically, Edward Washbourne died suddenly of pneumonia in March 1860 at the age of twenty-seven. A painting entitled “The Turn of the Tune” remained incomplete upon his easel. In this painting, the Traveler is taking his turn on the fiddle, playing the balance of the tune while the squatter danced with delight. The content of this painting

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., January 1860, 107.

<sup>31</sup>For more on the economic vitality of Arkansas in the 1850s, see Thomas A. DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword: Arkansas, 1861-1874* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2003), 1-5.

<sup>32</sup>Jeannie M. Whayne, Thomas A. DeBlack, George Sabo III, and Morris Arnold, *Arkansas: A Narrative History* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2002), 149.

<sup>33</sup>*Arkansas State Democrat*, November 2, 1859.

further reinforced the common understanding reached between the squatter and the wealthy traveler. The opening of Washbourne's obituary in the *Fayetteville Arkansian* is telling.

There is now a gloomy day upon Arkansas. Her most gifted son is dead. . . . his loss reaches far beyond the circle of family and friends. He was the only painter that Arkansas ever produced. He bore her name proudly in the halls of art in the more favored parts of the Union. Among the best productions there his challenged and received a flattering admiration. He met with unrestrained success. No painter in the West has ever acquired greater distinction and certainly no one more justly merited it.<sup>34</sup>

The *Arkansas Gazette* went further:

Arkansas boasts numerous sons who own broad acres and great property,—men of influence among their fellows,—men who proudly walk the broad road of ordinary affairs; but within the sacred circle of the arts she has had but one to tread,—and he is dead . . . . We have not the least doubt, had he lived, that he ever would have produced a picture that was not illustrative of Arkansas life or history. His first attempt, the "Traveller" was but a ray from the lamp within him. It was his wish to establish a Gallery of the South,—a place for the exhibitions of his own and other artists' works . . . . The establishment of an art-emporium for the South! It was a noble and brilliant vision.<sup>35</sup>

With Washbourne's death, Arkansas lost one of her most favored sons, and the Arkansas Traveler legend and painting lost their most strident defender. Washbourne's death would also prove to be a foreshadowing of the death of an era. For on May 6, 1861, Arkansas would sever its bonds with the Union and move along a path to civil war, the consequences of which would be devastating to the state. During the war, nothing of consequence is printed about the painting as the press

<sup>34</sup>*Fayetteville Arkansian*, April 6, 1860.

<sup>35</sup>*Arkansas Gazette*, May 12, 1860.

of the state turned to weightier matters. The transformation of the tale and the history of the painting were already underway however. *The Arkansas Traveler's Song Book* appeared in 1864 as the Civil War was nearing its end. Published in New York, the cover picture suggests that the story was being transformed. The man on the horse was much more poorly dressed. Here the traveler was an outsider from east coast who "has never had the courage to visit Arkansas since!"<sup>36</sup> Where Washbourne had been careful to outline the presence of three social types in Arkansas: the wealthy traveler, the squatter, and the artist himself; this image is entirely negative. Washbourne and Faulkner emphasized the witty humor of the squatter and the bond they shared with a common love of music. These details are now excluded from the story. Had Washbourne been alive he would surely have protested as he had done with the *Knickerbocker* article.

After the war, the story of the painting took a fascinating turn. In 1866, Edward's brother, J. Woodward Washburn, wrote to his wife Susan and relayed the following:

I have not yet heard of Ed' pictures though I have written. I shall write again and if I have or can get the money, I would and will go to New York and trace it up and find the pictures or fail. I do hope I will be able to get then pictures for the sake of my dear brother's memory, the most sacred thing on earth to me, and to put in my aged mother's hand the gold that will lift her from the tired, hard and heartbreaking life now weighing her down to the grave. God grant I may succeed—for my cause I know is holy.<sup>37</sup>

J. W. Washburn's comments suggest to many that both the *Arkansas Traveler* painting and its companion, *The Turn of the Tune*, were missing. Later, a painting of the *Arkansas Traveler* would reappear in the family but the fate of the painting entitled "The Turn of the Tune" remains a mystery.<sup>38</sup> J. W. Washbourne's letter suggests that interest in the *Arkansas Traveler* was still high in the state. His words also convey

<sup>36</sup> *The Arkansas Traveler's Song Book* (New York: Dick and Fitzgerald, 1864), 5.

<sup>37</sup> J. Woodward Washburn to Susan Washburn, January 16, 1866, Washburn Family Letters.

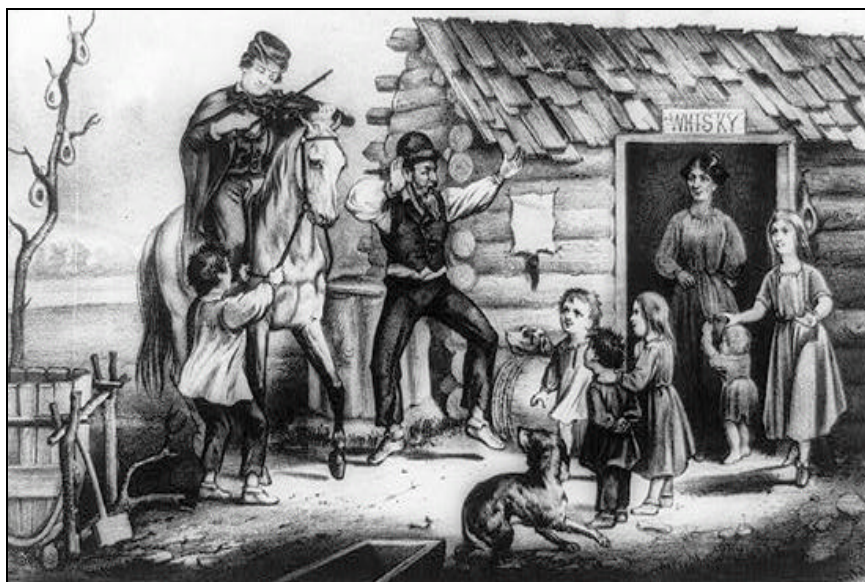
<sup>38</sup> For a discussion of the missing painting, see Sarah Brown, "Arkansas Traveller: Southwest Humor on Canvas."



Currier & Ives' *Arkansas Traveler*. Courtesy Library of Congress.

the dire financial situation of his mother, a circumstance common to Arkansans after the war.

In 1870, Currier and Ives produced lithographs of both the *Arkansas Traveler* and the *Turn of the Tune*. It remains unknown whether Currier & Ives had access to the originals that J. W. Washburn was looking for or whether artist John Cameron simply recreated them based upon the Grozelier lithograph. Currier & Ives prints enjoyed widespread popularity in the days before the rise of inexpensive photography. The *Arkansas Traveler* print sold for between twenty and forty cents and circulated widely. The Currier & Ives print, subtitled *Scene in the Back Woods of Arkansas*, included a much abbreviated dialogue. In this version of the dialogue, the power of the squatter is not emphasized. Although the traveler plays the end of the tune on the fiddle, the story ends before the reader can surmise that the two characters have formed a bond through a common love of music. No credit is given to Washbourne as the original artist, and Sandy Faulkner is not mentioned. Washbourne would surely have defended his painting and the story behind it, but there is no evidence that any other Arkansan stepped forward to do so.



Currier & Ives' *Turn of the Tale*. Courtesy Library of Congress.

The Currier & Ives lithographs unquestionably helped to spread the image of the Arkansas Traveler across the United States. However, the widespread circulation of the picture does not seem to have provoked comment in the major Arkansas newspapers of the time. On April 12, 1873, the General Assembly created a new county of land from Conway and Pulaski Counties and named Faulkner County in honor of Sandford C. Faulkner. Clearly, the legislature in 1873 appreciated the Arkansas Traveler story.<sup>39</sup>

Three years later, the state of Arkansas included a copy of the painting in its exhibit at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. Arkansas, which was emerging from Reconstruction battered, bruised, and more than \$10 million in debt, sought to use the Exposition to bolster the state's fortunes and sagging image. Gov. Augustus H. Garland obtained an appropriation of \$15,000 for the Arkansas building, no small amount at this time. Some of this money was used to commission James Fortenbury to paint a version of the *Arkansas Traveler* based upon the Grozelier lithograph. The state proudly dis-

<sup>39</sup>Smith, "Sanford C. Faulkner," 311.

played Fortenbury's copy at the Exposition alongside portraits of prominent Arkansas gentlemen including Sandford Faulkner and exhibits that boasted of the state's resources in timber, minerals, and agriculture. The women's reception room contained a piano, and, according to one observer, "the sight of it moved so many persons to sit down and render Arkansas Traveler," the strains came from the building all hours of the day.<sup>40</sup>

The commissioning of the painting for this event perceived to be so important to Arkansas's future demonstrates that the painting was still highly regarded in 1876. It also raises the question as why the Washbourne original was not used if it was available. A 1934 *Arkansas Gazette Magazine* article about the state's exhibits at the Centennial Exposition says that a Mrs. Belcher, "hated the conversation painted in; she feared it would give the wrong impression of Arkansas people." Presumably this was a reference to a portion of the Traveler dialogue included with the picture. Another Exposition visitor, however, noted the presence of the painting, among other items, in the Arkansas building before concluding, "The building, throughout, is one of which any state might be proud, and tends to remove many false ideas which people have of Arkansas."<sup>41</sup> After the exposition, Fortenbury's expectation of the great importance of the painting was noted in his reluctance to sell the painting at auction for less than \$100.<sup>42</sup>

One of the first recorded cracks in the enthusiasm for the painting came in 1877 with an article in the *Arkansas Gazette* by James Dye. Dye applauded the appropriation of state funds for the Arkansas Building at the Centennial, concluding that the money had brought the state good publicity. He noted, though, that the only previous advertisement of "really wide and extensive circulation, was the famous picture of the Arkansas Traveler." This is somewhat ironic as the Fortenbury picture was hanging in the Arkansas Building. Nevertheless, he went on to insist that the picture:

has provoked many a hearty laugh at home and abroad, but the injury we have sustained by it is incalculable. It gave us charac-

<sup>40</sup>Diana Sherwood, "Arkansas at the First World Fair," *Arkansas Gazette Magazine*, May 27, 1934.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*; *Arkansas Gazette*, October 11, 1876.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, February 17, 1877.



ter abroad, it is true, but it was for shiftlessness, indolence and improvidence. When they look at it and think of us, they have visions of rude, floorless, half-covered and illy-constructed huts; of fiddles, whisky, shot-guns, pistols, coonskin caps and dogs, and of ignorant and sadly neglected children.

Dye argued that Arkansans needed to disabuse the rest of the nation of the image conveyed by the picture as it had discouraged certain types of people from moving to the state:

We need more people, industrious, energetic, enterprising people, to help us clear and cultivate our broad and fertile acres, convert our forests of pine, oak, ash, gum, walnut etc., into lumber, develop our vast mineral and other resources, thereby increasing our wealth.<sup>43</sup>

The hopes of 1875 and the new administration were already beginning to fade by the time Dye penned his letter. The sorry state of the Arkansas economy was revealed when Fortenbury again attempted to auction off his *Arkansas Traveller* in August 1877. The *Gazette* noted:

The sale of Mr. Fortenbury's pictures did not result in a bonanza for the artist, and the bidding and sales were fair evidences of the stringency of the money market and a determination on the part of the lovers of fine arts to hold onto their surplus cash. The "Arkansas Traveler" for which Mr. F. had repeatedly been offered \$100, was knocked down for \$50 . . . . Many of the pictures did not net the price of the frames in which they were enclosed"<sup>44</sup>

James Dye may have uttered the first public criticism of the *Arkansas Traveler*, but the real wave of opinion against it would come in 1895 as the state was mired in a decade-long agricultural crisis. Declining crop prices plagued farmers throughout the nation, but the crisis was particularly acute in Arkansas. The rural population was growing due

<sup>43</sup>James Dye, "A Suggestion—What Say the Press of the State?" *Arkansas Gazette*, July 21, 1877.

<sup>44</sup>*Arkansas Gazette*, August 3, 1877.

to immigration and natural increases yet good farmland was limited in the state. This contributed to a decline in the size of farms. Years of bad weather in the 1880s combined with the decline in farm size led to a burgeoning tenant class that was increasingly impoverished. This poverty led to malnutrition, unsanitary conditions, and, ultimately, disease. Many rural Arkansans suffered from typhoid fever, malaria, or yellow fever.<sup>45</sup> Given these conditions, it was not surprising that when Arkansans looked at the painting in the early 1890s they despaired at what they saw. More people than ever resembled the squatter. Where in 1859, the painting may have seemed like a charming depiction of a disappearing culture, by 1895 the depiction seemed more true than ever before.

In 1895, William H. Edmonds published a booklet entitled *The Truth about Arkansas*. While Edmonds insisted that he was simply responding to negative press about Arkansas in one of the New York dailies, it must be noted that this document is a printed advertisement for the Cotton Belt Railroad to encourage immigration. He asserted:

Probably no other State are there so many misconceptions and so many inaccurate popular ideas as about Arkansas. The State has a large area of swamp, and the conditions existing in those regions have in the popular mind given character to the whole State. The chronicler of the wanderings of that noted personage, "The Arkansaw Traveler," for example, may be said to have cost the State millions of dollars."<sup>46</sup>

Edmonds is widely cited as evidence of the impact of the *Arkansas Traveler* upon the state's economy. But there is no foundation for Edmonds calculation of this impact. He cited no sources, and his estimate of millions of dollars is unrealistic when seen in the light of Arkansas's agricultural crisis. While the specific newspaper article to which Edmonds objected has never been identified, he quoted several portions, all of which share the flavor of the following:

<sup>45</sup>Carl Moneyhon, *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1997), 64-67.

<sup>46</sup>William H. Edmonds, *The Truth about Arkansas* (Little Rock: Cotton Belt Route, 1895), 6.

For miles, on either side of the river, the low marshy land stretches away into the distance, scarcely higher than the river itself. Here and there is a little forest, the trunks of the trees submerged in mud and stagnant water. The few houses that mark little villages like Ouachita City, Log Town and Charlie V., are for the most part frame boxes raised aloft on four poles, after the plan adopted by New York farmers to keep their granaries out of reach of the rats. This plan is followed as protection against the spring floods. The cabins along the banks of the river are wretched-looking hovels, inhabited by negroes, or by what are known throughout the cotton country as poor white trash.<sup>47</sup>

News coverage of Arkansas from other states often contained the stereotypes that Edmunds refers to. Like those that plagued Arkansas in the territorial period, stories published in the form of travel diaries appear as most harsh. William Drysdale, a writer for the *New York Times*, published several stories in the 1880s about his travels through Arkansas. Under the headline "The Big Arkansas Swamp: Half a Day in the Home of Yellow Death," he wrote:

It is not one big bog of utterly worthless land, uninhabited and desolate; it has some widely separated bits of arable land, on which settlers live and this makes it so much the more lonely and depressing thinking of those poor wretches who are trying to wring the trifle which they consider 'a living' out of the shiny soil. The best building all through the swamp was a log cabin, and there were very few even of them. There were fields of cotton, surrounded by miles of forest and swamp. There was occasionally a station, a board shanty, with a half a dozen walking corpses leaning against the neighboring fence, looking at the train-natives who never wore a suit of store clothes or ate a good square meal in their lives; men with gaunt and yellow faces and lank forms, and carrot hair brushing their shoulders, their chins painted with tobacco-juice-libelous caricatures of human beings. Seventy-five miles we went through this deso-

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 10.

late, dismal swamp, and the recollection of it sticks to me like a nightmare.<sup>48</sup>

There is no doubt that Drysdale's writings and others like them helped to perpetuate the negative image of Arkansas throughout the latter part of the century.

Though it cannot be disputed that these articles conveyed a negative image of the state in the late nineteenth century, what they do not convey is a relationship between the Arkansas Traveler story (or its rendition in oil) and this negative image. Rather it was Arkansans like Edmonds, who saw that the painting was no longer a charming rendition of the past but an all-too-real depiction of the present. By his indictment of the *Traveler* in his off-cited pamphlet, it is Edmonds, rather than writers like Drysdale, who made the *Arkansas Traveler* the villain.

In that same year, H.C. Mercer wrote an article for New York-based *Century* magazine entitled "On the Track of the Arkansas Traveler," which included a retelling and discussion of the Arkansas Traveler story. Mercer's article has been cited by many historians who have written about the *Arkansas Traveler* since 1895. Historian Sarah Brown and others have used it to illustrate that some feel the *Arkansas Traveler* "had checked immigration and done incalculable injury to the state."<sup>49</sup> However, a rereading of his article reveals that Mercer himself made no such conclusions. He recounted the story and makes some investigation into its origins. The interesting part of his article arrives when he attempted to make inquiries about the origins of the story in Arkansas.

When we seek to trace back the legend to its own country, a surprise is in store for us. To learn from certain authorities in Arkansas that the myth is discountenanced there by a strong state feeling argues ill for our enterprise; and it throws an unexpected seriousness over the situation to be told that the dialogue at the cabin is "a misrepresentation and a slur," and that the hero of the story, pursuing "a strange errand of misconception," has "checked immigration" and "done incalculable injury to the State." To get at the bottom of the matter in a

<sup>48</sup>William Drysdale, "The Big Arkansas Swamp: Half a Day in the Home of Yellow Death," *New York Times*, January 4, 1884.

<sup>49</sup>Brown, "Arkansas Traveller: Southwest Humor on Canvas," 371.

friendly way involves a discussion as to what induces settlers to settle, what people generally do with their ballads and myths

The notion that the story had “checked immigration” and “done incalculable injury” to the state echoed the charges of the James Dye editorial of 1877. Mercer simply reported what those, like Dye, had already said. When Mercer noted that he was surprised by the reaction of Arkansans to the story, we might surmise that this was because he had not been aware of the negativity surrounding the story. Thus, here again it was Arkansans who associated the painting with the state’s negative image. Mercer clearly identified the Arkansas Traveler story as a myth, a legend before concluding, “Like all true creations of fancy, it eludes definite description and defies criticism, while the notes of the tune sound a gay disregard of the boards of immigration and State statistics.”<sup>50</sup>

The third source from 1895 commonly cited as evidence for the painting’s complicity in giving the state a bad reputation is the memoir of Judge William F. Pope, which asserted that the painting:

with its accompanying colloquy, which has had a wide-spread circulation, has done untold injury to the good name of the state and her people. Conceived in a spirit of fun and jocularly, and intended for the amusement of a passing hour, the “Arkansaw Traveler” and his leaky cabin and squeaky fiddle has become in the eyes of many people the typical inhabitant of Arkansas . . . . Every community, no matter where, has among its people certain lazy, shiftless characters whose sole aim in life is simply to exist and raise up a brood of as worthless and good for nothing children.<sup>51</sup>

Described in the introduction as eighty years old, blind, and feeble, Pope included a few errors in his memoir. Pope noted the talent of the artist who had painted the original but misnames him as Charles P. Washburn. He also insisted that the painting hung for many years in

<sup>50</sup>H. C. Mercer, “On the Track of the Arkansas Traveler,” *Century Magazine* 5 (March 1896): 707-712.

<sup>51</sup>W. F. Pope, *Early Days in Arkansas: Being for the Most Part the Personal Recollections of an Old Settler* (Little Rock: Frederick W. Allsopp, 1895), 231.

Sandy Faulkner's parlor, but no evidence that the original painting was in Faulkner's care exists. Pope went on to note that "there is some slight foundation for the story that I do not pretend to deny." Ironically, Pope's kinsman William Fontaine Pope died as a result of injuries sustained during a duel with Charles Fenton Noland in 1831. Duels like this had added to Arkansas's reputation for violence and poor image at the time.<sup>52</sup>

Thus, none of the three commonly cited sources can convincingly lay the blame for Arkansas's negative image at the feet of the *Arkansas Traveler*. Where the Traveler does become associated with this negative image, it is largely through the work of Arkansans themselves rather than from those outside the state.

Furthermore, many knowledgeable Arkansans defended the painting even at the turn of the century. Augustus Garland noted the following in an 1895 letter to Pope, perhaps in response to the latter's attack on the *Arkansas Traveler*:

Now, Judge, as to the good old Arkansas Traveler that I have heard so often and danced so much: I have one of Washburn's pictures of it, and I prize it dearly. I regard it as one of our best items of history. Old men here often ask me if old Sandy Faulkner, as they remember him, is alive and still plays that tune, and of how often they have heard them do so at receptions, parties, or from the White House down, in all sorts of circles, to the restaurants.

All communities and societies must have a rude and somewhat rustic beginning, from Greece and Rome down, and none of our states has done otherwise. All have had their little tokens, illustrations and inspirations, but none has had better than this. We can't begin at the top, but must begin at the bottom. The bowie knife and the Arkansas Traveler may appear oddly enough today, but not so in those days of sturdy, pushing, smart and honest and humble men, laying the foundation for future progress—by no means, and I would not blot out either, but preserve them.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 55.

Garland clearly understood the history of the painting. He knew that the well-dressed stranger was Sanford Faulkner and that an Arkansas artist was credited for the painting. This, and perhaps knowledge of the true nature of Arkansas's economic woes, allowed him to defend the painting.<sup>53</sup>

Fred Allsopp, long time editor of the *Arkansas Gazette* and the publisher of Pope's memoir, also had a problem with Pope's viewpoint. He later remarked:

Some sensitive Arkansans object to the legendary tale of the Arkansaw Traveler on the ground that it is a reflection upon the state, and should be relegated to oblivion; but like Bancho's Ghost, it will not down; and there is no good reason why it should be put down. It is merely a crude piece of humor in backwoods dialect, which has become a part of the folklore of the country. If Dickens had suppressed all the distinctive, but vulgar and reprehensible, Cockney types that abound in his stories, there would be little left of original or appealing interest in his works. The same may be said of the character delineations of Mark Twain and others of our American authors. The Squatter in the Arkansaw Traveler is not, and never was, typical of the state, and every community has now, or has had, similar peculiar types which may be represented properly in literature. There is nothing in the story to be ashamed of, and it will be handed down to posterity, though in the language of the lamented Edgar E. Bryant, "the Arkansaw Traveler has long since accomplished his mission, and the old fiddlers on the hillsides and in the valleys have long since been taught to 'change the tune' and to cover their houses, to be superseded by the knights of the grip and the order books. The Arkansaw Traveler story is but a bit of the color of romantic Arkansas."<sup>54</sup>

With the return of prosperity in the early twentieth century, criticism for the *Arkansas Traveler* waned somewhat, but the painting would never again be viewed with the degree of enthusiasm it once had. Opin-

<sup>53</sup>A. H. Garland to W. F. Pope, April 28, 1895, reprinted in the *Arkansas Gazette*, June 11, 1908.

<sup>54</sup>Fred Allsopp, *Folklore of Romantic Arkansas* (New York: Grolier Society, 1931), 53.

ion about the painting would be divided over the next one hundred years. A detailed account of the story of the painting appeared in a special supplement to the *Gazette*. The author's ambivalence about the Arkansas Traveler story is revealed in his caption to the reprinting of the tale:

The dialogue is reproduced here as a necessary part of the story of the "Arkansaw Traveler." On the ground that it has always been an unhappy advertisement for the state, there has always been a certain amount of objection to this crude piece of humor, which was no more typical of the Arkansas hill country than of many another region of early days.<sup>55</sup>

In 1920, the decision was made to change the name of the student newspaper at the University of Arkansas from the *University Weekly* to the *Arkansas Traveler*. Some students objected to this change as they feared the disreputable connotation the name might evoke. Despite their objection, the name was changed and editor Curry B. Freeman remarked:

It is not difficult to understand why some should see disgrace . . . and why others should object so strongly to a reminiscent of frontier days. The students are urged to get away from the idea that razorbacks and travelers are worthy of the dignity attached to their name. The ridiculous application of rural wit to the name of a great state has been discontinued, almost forgotten and only serves to remind people of the unscholarly attainments of previous generations. Such titles as the *Longhorn*, the *Sooner*, the *Jayhawker*, the *Tar Bady* [*sic.*], the *Haymakers* and *The Arkansas Traveler* recall to memory certain states or particular institutions, and do not, as most people suppose, convey misleading impressions. The citizens of Arkansas have no cause to be humiliated when the name *Arkansas Traveler* is mentioned in their presence.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>55</sup>Charles T. Davis, "The Story of the Arkansas Traveler," *Supplement to the Arkansas Gazette* November 20, 1919.

<sup>56</sup>A History of the *Arkansas Traveler* Web Log, <http://www.arkansastraveler.typepad.com> (accessed December 8, 2008).



Enthusiasm for the painting was renewed when the descendents of Edward Washbourne made an important donation to the Arkansas History Commission in May of 1957. This donation included the painting, Washbourne's portraits of himself, his sister Abbe, and their father, Cephas Washburn, two pencil drawings, a lithograph of Fort Smith, and the Grozelier lithograph of the *Arkansas Traveler*.<sup>57</sup> The *Arkansas Democrat* reported:

The "Traveler" painting and the portraits would be desirable acquisitions for any museum or private collection devoted to Americana. But the History Commission gallery is exactly the right permanent home. Paintings as rare as these deserve to be publicly exhibited, because what they tell belongs to everybody. At the commission they can be seen by the public most days of the week.

Had the "Traveler" gone to some other state, it would have been a blow to Arkansas pride. Citizens should feel indebted to the Washburn heirs for the generous expression of their own pride in the state.<sup>58</sup>

The timing of this donation is another of the fascinating turns in the story of this painting. Had Washbourne himself held up the mirror for the state as a warning of events to come? For a scant four months later, Arkansas would find itself embroiled in what could be argued as the single biggest blow to its image in its history. In September 1957, Gov. Orval Faubus would call in the National Guard to block nine black children from entering Little Rock's Central High School.<sup>59</sup> The image of fifteen-year-old Elizabeth Eckford taunted by students and parents surely created more damage than Washbourne's painting could have done.

Thus, Washbourne's painting neither originated Arkansas's negative image nor is it responsible for its perpetuation. In the twenty-first century, historians have largely tired of discussing the *Arkansas Traveler*

<sup>57</sup> Catalogue of the Washburn Collection by the heirs of C. W. and Ella Langford Dodd, May 6, 1957, Arkansas History Commission.

<sup>58</sup> *Arkansas Democrat*, May 10, 1957.

<sup>59</sup> For an exhaustive and recent account of the Little Rock crisis, see Elizabeth Jacoway, *Turn Away Thy Son: Little Rock, the Crisis that Shocked the Nation* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2007).

but its negative reputation lingers. The current Arkansas history college textbook credits the painting with perpetuating “a lingering image of Arkansas as the home of the poor and shiftless.”<sup>60</sup> The Shiloh Museum of Ozark History in northwest Arkansas has a small exhibit crediting the painting with Arkansas’s poor image outside of the state, while refraining from outlining the story of Edward Washbourne and Sanford Faulkner. The online *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, while not placing all the blame for Arkansas’s image upon Washbourne, notes that he gave a “final touch to the rustic image with a painting titled the *Arkansas Traveler*.” The digital image provided is the Currier and Ives lithograph rather than the Grozelier lithograph supervised by Washbourne.<sup>61</sup>

For the population at large, the origin of the term has largely been forgotten though some have sought to reinforce and capitalize on the image of the squatter in such ventures as the ill-advised Dogpatch U.S.A. theme park south of Harrison. The term has been co-opted for a variety of uses such as tomatoes, boats, and those Arkansans who travelled the nation on behalf of Bill Clinton’s presidential campaigns. Michael B. Dougan suggests that “elitist Arkansans have tried to suppress the story, while the disaffected have gloried in it.”<sup>62</sup>

Unfortunately, since Washbourne’s death, Arkansas has not defended the painting and the story in the way that we can assume he would have done. If the original meaning of the story has been lost, then it is Arkansas that is to blame. Instead of engaging in serious analysis of the elements of the painting itself, state historians have been satisfied with the interpretation of the painting suggested by Messrs. Currier and Ives. This is surprising given that the painting is not about what New Yorkers felt about Arkansas; it is a lasting depiction of what an Arkansan felt about Arkansas. It depicts the social hierarchy as Washbourne understood it on the very eve of Civil War. The planter is portrayed as the social superior in the public realm, though the squatter clearly participates and exerts power. Washbourne presents two women along with children lingering in the doorway of the cabin, unable to enter the public sphere dominated by the planter and accessed by the squatter as a white male in the great American democratic ex-

<sup>60</sup>Wayne, DeBlack, Sabo, and Arnold, *Arkansas: A Narrative History*, 115.

<sup>61</sup>C. Fred Williams, “Arkansas’s Image,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=1> (accessed December 8, 2008).

<sup>62</sup>Michael B. Dougan, *Arkansas Odyssey* (Little Rock: Rose Publishing, 1993).

periment. The older woman with the corn cob pipe is presented as a joke, a caricature of the frontier woman. The younger woman is depicted as an object not concerned with the matters of the world at all, simply concerned with making herself pretty. The children appear to all have the same face suggesting their lack of individuality and relevance to the body politic. Those at the lowest level of the social hierarchy in Arkansas, the slaves of Faulkner and the other slaveholders, are not even depicted in this scene thus confirming their complete lack of power within this system. Future research should attempt to further analyze the painting in more detail.

Perhaps the lack of interest in the painting results from a fear of discussing negative aspects of Arkansas both past and present; a fear that discussion of a painting depicting poor people will further reinforce Arkansas's negative image. A contemporary author on the topic refers to an oversensitivity among image-conscious Arkansans and notes that this sensitivity—what he calls “an exaggerated concern about how outsiders might perceive Arkansas and its people”—is a “haunting presence in Arkansas history, one that goes back to the eighteenth century and seems certain to endure into the twenty-first.”<sup>63</sup>

This oversensitivity may explain why neither the painting nor the legend of the Arkansas Traveler has a permanent exhibition in any of the Little Rock museums, despite Swannee Bennett and William Worthen's assertion in their 1991 *Arkansas Made* that of the artists “that lived and worked in antebellum Arkansas none gained greater acclaim than Edward Payson Washbourne.”<sup>64</sup> The painting and other portraits produced by Washbourne as well as the Grozelier lithograph spend most of their time buried in the archives of the Arkansas History Commission. When the painting was donated in 1957, it was in disrepair and the History Commission had it restored. Unfortunately, instead of providing a professional restoration, the restorer appears to have painted a new picture over the original. While the academic and esthetic value of the painting has undeniably been diminished by its restoration, the Grozelier lithograph is of great importance to Arkansas history as its caption underlines the reasons for the enthusiasm and optimism surrounding the painting in 1860. This lithograph reminds us

4. <sup>63</sup>Bob Lancaster *The Jungles of Arkansas* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1989),

<sup>64</sup>Bennett and Worthen, *Arkansas Made*, 170.

that Arkansas is not defined by one social type but by a variety. Its creation was supervised by Washbourne himself and is now our most lasting representation of Washbourne's *Arkansas Traveller*. The history of this painting, the story, and the artist must not be avoided but discussed and celebrated. We must not be afraid to hold up the mirror and look directly into it. Only then can we build upon the lessons of history to create a state that our children will be proud to call their home. In the words of William Quesenbury, "Bill Cush," who wrongly believed in 1878 that his song would be forgotten:

Ask one of *these* from whence he hailed,  
 He will not shrink as if assailed,  
 But standing forth with head erect,  
 Without reserve or retrospect,  
 Or slow evasive hem or haw, sir,  
 Will blurt, "*I am from Arkansas, sir!*"<sup>65</sup>

### ***Appendix: The Arkansas Traveller***

*The following version of the Arkansas Traveler story was provided to the Knickerbocker, a New York magazine, by Edward Washbourne in 1859.*<sup>66</sup>

A burlesque tune known as "The Arkansas Traveller," is exceedingly popular at the West and South, and originated from the incidents of the following story—which are exactly as related fifteen or twenty years ago – by the author of the tune and story, Co. S. C. Faulkner of Arkansas. The narrator plays the air vehemently, on a fiddle, for a short time, then relates a portion of the story; then again falls to playing, as if he had given his audience enough of a good thing, for one time.

"In the earlier days of the territory of Arkansas, when the settlements were few and far between, an adventurous traveler from one of the old States, while traversing the swamps of that portion of the kedn'try, gets lost, on a cold, rainy day, in the autumn of the year. After wandering till evening, and despairing of finding a habitation, while searching for a place to camp, he strikes a trail which seems to lead

<sup>65</sup> Masterson, *Tall Tales of Arkansas*, 290.

<sup>66</sup> *Knickerbocker Magazine*, January 1860, 107.

somewhere, and also hears in that direction the noise of a fiddle. Accordingly he takes the trail and soon discovers, ahead of him, rising above the timber, a light column of smoke, which he knows comes from the cabin of a squatter. As he approaches, he finds it to be a log cabin, ten logs high and about ten feet square— one side being roofed, and the other only half covered with boards. He also sees the proprietor seated on an old whisky-barrel, near the door, sheltered by a few boards which project from the eaves, playing a tune, or rather the first snatch of a tune, on an old fiddle.

“After surveying the habitation and surroundings of ‘cotton head’ children, the traveler rides up to see if he can get lodgings; and the following dialogue ensues. The hoosier, however, still continuing to play the same part over and over again, only stopping to give short, indifferent replies to the traveller’s queries:

“Traveller: Good Morning, Sir!

Squatter: How d’ye do, Sir?

Trav.: Can I get to stay all night with you?

Squat: No, Sir.

Trav.: Can’t you give me a glass of something to drink; I’m very wet and cold?

Squat.: I drank the last drap this morning.

Trav.: I am very hungry; ain’t had a thing to eat to-day. Will you let me have something to eat?

Squat.: Hav n’t a darned thing in the house.

Trav.: Then can’t you give my horse something?

Squat.: Got nothing to feed him on.

Trav.: How far is it to the next house?

Trav.: Stranger, I do n’t know; I’ve never been there.

Trav.: Well, where does this road go to?

Squat.: It’s never been anywhere since I’ve lived here; it’s always here when I get up in the morning.

Trav.: As I am not likely to get to any other house to-night, can’t you let me sleep in yours, and I’ll tie my horse to a tree and do without anything to eat or drink?

Squat.: My house leaks; there’s only one dry spot in it, and me and Sal sleeps on that.

Trav.: Why do n't you finish covering your house and stop the leaks?

Squat.: It's raining.

Trav.: Well, why do n't you do it when it is not raining?

Squat.: It do n't leak then.

Trav.: Well, as you have nothing to eat or drink in your house, and nothing alive about your place but children, how do you do here, anyhow?

Squat.: Putty well, I thank you. How d'ye do yourself?

Trav.: (After trying in vain all sorts of ways to extract some satisfactory information from him.) My friend, why do n't you play the whole of that tune?

Squat.: (Stops playing and looks up for the first time.) I did not know there was any more to it. Can you play the fiddle stranger?

Trav.: I play a little, sometimes.

Squat.: You do n't look much like a fiddler, (handing him the fiddle.) Will you play the balance of that tune?

The traveler gets down and plays the tune.

Squat.: Stranger, come in! Take a half dozen chairs and sit down. Sal, go round into the holler, where I killed that buck this morning. Cut off some of the best pieces and fetch it, and cook it for me and this gentleman, directly. Raise up the board under the head of the bed, afore you go, and get the old black jug I hid from Dick, and give us some whisky—I know there's some left yet. Dick, carry the gentleman's horse round to the shed; you'll find some fodder and corn there. Give him as much as he can eat. Durn me, stranger, if you can't stay as long as you please, and I'll give you plenty to eat and drink. Hurry, old woman. If you can't find the butcher-knife, take the cob-handle, or granny's knife. Play away, stranger! You shall sleep on the dry spot to-night.

After about two hours' fiddling and some conversation, in which the squatter shows his characteristics, the stranger retires to the 'dry spot.'"