Currier and Ives Encyclopedia Article

Currier and Ives

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Currier and Ives

The decorative and hugely popular colored lithographs mass produced by Currier and Ives in the nineteenth century and familiar to subsequent generations through Christmas cards and calendars illustrate sporting scenes and sailing ships, noteworthy triumphs and disasters, Indian uprisings and comic vignettes, rustic beauty and domestic bliss, and, in general, evoke an idealized and sentimental view of life in nineteenth-century America. Typically, a well-known artist's work would be reproduced as a black-and-white lithograph, hand colored by a team of women, and distributed by the thousands at costs ranging from a few cents to a few dollars, depending on size. The firm was founded in New York City in 1834 by Nathaniel Currier, employed James Merritt Ives in 1852, and became Currier and Ives in 1857; the two were succeeded by their sons, who managed the company until its closing in 1907, by which time more than seven thousand different prints had been produced.

Further Reading:

Baragwanath, Albert K. *Currier and Ives.* New York, Abbeville Press, 1980.

Currier and Ives: A Catalogue Raisonné. Detroit, Gale Research, 1984.