**Alfred Jacob Miller**

**American, 1810-1874**

*The Trapper's Bride*

1850
il on canvas, 30 x 25 inches

*Museums Purchase*

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**Journey to the Rocky Mountains**

**Captain William Dunham**

**Stewart**

fulfilled four original expeditions to the Rocky Mountains and the
routemakers, however the one in 1837 was different. He secured the services of artist Alfred Jacob Miller to visually document the trip, and then to create oil paintings and additional artworks upon his return. The traveling party's adventure started in May 1837 as they departed Independence, Missouri. The members of the party included Stewart, Miller, Antoine Clement, Francois Lajoisier, a cook, threeengers and two packers. They began with a cover of the American Fur Company, and the caravan consisted of 40 mules and 20 oxen. It headed west passing by Chimney Rock and Scott's Bluffs along the Little Blue River with the first stop of Fort Laramie in their sights. Register Rock and Devil's Gate are found on Sweetwater River path, and then on to the rendezvous held near the confluence of the Green River and Horse Creek in Wyoming.

The path leads to the Rocky Mountains and later known as the Oregon Trail. During the trip they encoun-
tered a group of French Indians who turned out to be friendly just wanting payment for the group's wagon train to continue through that land. Stewart agreed by giving them what he could, blankets, tobacco and ammunition. When they reached the rendezvous, the trappers made a grand entrance of Stewart's arrival. Miller observed hundreds of trappers and thousands of Indians trading, and they became the subjects for many of his paintings. He made sketches of trappers pursuing Indian maidens to create paintings such as *The Trapper's Bride*.

After participating in the three-week long rendezvous, Stewart's party headed further west to the Rocky Mountains to Wood River country in Utah and then returned to St. Louis in October. The trip's outcome for Miller was a successful field sketch that he would use over the next 30 years to create more than a thousand paintings for Stewart and other patrons.

**The Trapper's Bride** or *Bartering for a Bride*, (The Trapper's Bride), (1840s) Oil on canvas, 19 x 16 inches

*Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Scott L. Probasco, Jr.*

*Joslyn Art Museum*

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**Discussion Questions**

1. What do you see? What story is Miller telling with these paintings?

2. What do you see? What emotions are expressed?

3. Which version do you prefer and why?

4. What is the significance of the white horse in these paintings?

5. What is the significance of the Indian woman and the trapper in these paintings?

6. What is the significance of the American flag in these paintings?

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**From the Museum to the Classroom Extensions**

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**Time Arts - The Tributes**

**Stewart** made a realistic portrait and a life size sculpture of his wife in the American West. Miller frequented his studio in the American West and based his paintings on the local flora and fauna. He was known for his work in the American West and based his paintings on the local flora and fauna. He was known for his work in the American West and based his paintings on the local flora and fauna.

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**Language Arts - Compare and Contrast**

**Miller** compared each scene with the historical narrative of the Rocky Mountains and the West. He created a series of three to five artworks in each scene, and then created oil paintings and additional artworks upon his return. The traveling party's adventure started in May 1837 as they departed Independence, Missouri. The members of the party included Stewart, Miller, Antoine Clement, Francois Lajoisier, a cook, threeengers and two packers. They began with a cover of the American Fur Company, and the caravan consisted of 40 mules and 20 oxen. It headed west passing by Chimney Rock and Scott's Bluffs along the Little Blue River with the first stop of Fort Laramie in their sights. Register Rock and Devil's Gate are found on Sweetwater River path, and then on to the rendezvous held near the confluence of the Green River and Horse Creek in Wyoming.

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Alfred Jacob Miller

Alfred Jacob Miller was born on January 2, 1810 in Baltimore, MD. He is best known for his paintings on the journey to the Rocky Mountains with Captain William Drummond Stewart. Although known for romanticizing the subject in his renderings, he is one of the first significant artists to paint the Rocky Mountains as well as document the fur trade industry. While living in Philadelphia from 1831 to 1832, Miller had the opportunity to study under artist Thomas Sully who was considered one of America’s best portraitists. While in Paris, he studied with a group of artists called “The Romantics” and that sense of romanticism was reflected in their paintings. When he returned to the states, Miller briefly opened a studio in Baltimore. That venture proved unsuccessful so Miller set his sights on New Orleans launching a studio in 1836 with only $30 to his name.

1837 proved to be a significant turning point in Miller’s career. While attempting to make a successful career out of portraiture, he met Captain Stewart, a British Army officer and Scottish aristocrat, in April who in turn asked him to document a journey to the Rocky Mountains with him. After returning, Miller started creating these oil paintings for Stewart late 1837 while in New Orleans, and then Stewart invited Miller to come to his castle. Before he left, Miller had a showing of the artworks in July 1838 in Baltimore as well as an exhibition in New York City in 1839. A number of people attended it as it was their first opportunity to see depictions of the Rocky Mountains and Native Americans. In 1842, Miller returned to Baltimore to resume his studies and enjoy a successful career creating western paintings and portraiture never returning to the West. Due to lack of poor health and lack of commission, he retires in 1872. Miller never married and died on June 26, 1874.

Journey to Rocky Mountains

Captain William Drummond Stewart completed four annual expeditions to the Rocky Mountains and the somewhat, however the one in 1837 would be different. He secured the services of artist Alfred Jacob Miller to visually document the trip and then he would create oil paintings upon their return. The trip’s adventure started on a steamship sailing up the Mississippi River to St. Louis. The members of the party included Stewart, Miller, Antoine Clement, Francois Lapenuse, a cook, three engineers and two packers. Next they met up with a crew from the American Fur Company, and the caravan now consisted of 45 men and 20 wagons. It headed west past Channeys Rock and Scotts Bluffs along the Little Blue River with the first stop of Fort Laramie in their sights. Register Rock and Devil’s Gate also are found on Sweetwater River path, and then on to the rendezvous held near the confluence of the Green River and Horse Creek in Wyoming.

The path taken to the Rocky Mountains would later be known as the Oregon Trail. During the trip to the Rocky Mountains, Miller and his fellow artists set up a temporary camp along the path to the Base of the Rocky Mountains. Miller met his future wife, Minerva Miller, in 1844, the Snake Indians made a “grand entrance in honor of Stewart’s arrival.” Miller observed hundreds of trappers and thousands of Indians trading who provided the subjects for many of his paintings. He made sketches of trappers pursuing Indian maidens to create paintings such as his The Trapper’s Bride. Stewart’s kindness to the Snake Indians resulted in a parade of 2,000 Indians in his honor. Stewart’s party headed further west to the Rocky Mountains to Wind River county after participating in the approximately three-week long rendezvous. The outcome of this trip for Miller was 166 art works in addition to his numerous sketches used to create the final portraits and scenes.

What is Art of the American West?

Art that depicts events or scenes in the continental US west of the Mississippi River

1831-1832

Miller studies portraiture in Philadelphia with Thomas Sully.

1833-1834

Prince Maximillian of Wied-Neuwied sets out on an expedition west with artist Karl Bodmer

1835

Miller studies in Paris and travels to Italy. He studies at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. During this time he could be found at the Louvre recreating the Old Masters. Then returns to Baltimore, MD to open a studio over a music store.

1837

Miller meets Captain William Drummond Stewart in April and they set out to document the trip to the Rocky Mountains. In July they attend the rendezvous near the confluence of Horse Creek and Green River in Wyoming

1844

Miller lives in Stewart’s home, Murthly Castle in Scotland, creating oil paintings of their journey to the Rocky Mountains.

1846

Miller moves back to Baltimore, Maryland and April and resumes his studio and is known for his portraiture and American West paintings.