

# PANORAMA

International Panorama Council Journal, Volume 3

Selected Proceedings from the 28th IPC Conference

2019



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### **International Panorama Council Journal, Volume 3**

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# Tracing What Remains: Looking for James Wilkins's *The Immense Moving Mirror of the Overland Trail*

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## Abstract

In 1849 little known artist James Wilkins traveled the Overland Trail from St. Louis, Missouri to Hang Town (now Placerville), California to collect and record landscape details as studies from which he produced a scroll panorama, *The Immense Moving Mirror of the Overland Trail*. The panorama is nonextant but a journal and 50 watercolor drawings survive alongside 13 paintings and an assortment of archival ephemera. Inspired by Wilkins's journey, I chose to retrace his route in the fall of 2017. I recorded the experience in watercolor, photography and video as a method for understanding the panorama's contemporary resonances as an historical document. This essay reflects on the residues of Wilkins's journey alongside contemporary observations from the same landscapes.

## Keywords

James Wilkins, Overland Trail, California Trail, 1849, gold rush, panorama, moving mirror.

## Tracing What Remains

In 1849, little-known artist James Wilkins traveled the then popular Overland Trail from St. Louis, Missouri to Hang Town (now Placerville), California in 1849. The purpose of Wilkins's journey was to collect visual details from the landscape to inform the creation of a scroll panorama called the *Immense Moving Mirror of the Land Route to California. By the South Pass of the Rocky Mountains, Embracing the Scenery from the Missouri River to San Francisco*. While the panorama has long since disappeared, studying the traces that remain—a journal, 50 watercolor studies, 13 paintings, and an assortment of archival ephemera—inspired me to retrace his journey in the present time. [2]

Wilkins's journal, coupled with the remaining watercolor studies, offer a rich cultural and social record and a rare glimpse of the landscapes west of the Mississippi at a crucial moment of change. Just a year and a month before James Wilkins's departure, an announcement from San Francisco had declared the discovery of gold at New Helvetia. The region we now know as California was in the process of gaining statehood. [1]

The panorama itself is now lost, its details left largely to interpretation and speculation. Inspired by the Velaslavasay Panorama's 2010 recreation of *The Grand Moving Mirror of California* in Los Angeles, an idea began to take form. [4] In the process of studying the Wilkins story I had begun to conceptually devise a series of imaginary performances. The Velaslavasay reconstruction is a remarkable creative response to historic material that provides a vivid recapitulation of the form. By utilizing and extending what had been learned there, the possibility of re-creating the painted portion of Wilkins's panorama became a feasible reality. But what would this add to what has already been achieved in *The Grand Moving Mirror of California*? With additional research and deeper engagement, I delved into tracing the motivations and experiences that produced these panoramic exhibitions in the first place. I wanted to understand more about who James Wilkins was and why he made his panorama. Having examined all the available materials, I realized the only artifact I had not studied was the landscape itself. I felt compelled to experience the journey and to study the experience of it as an extended method of inquiry.

## Landscape as Context, Experience as Method

Over a six-week period in the fall of 2017, I traveled the same route Wilkins had taken, a journey that in the 1840s took an average of six months. I too made a series of observational watercolor paintings, typically one per day. I kept a journal and additionally took many digital photographs and video recordings. As the journey progressed I became increasingly focused on contemporary details in the landscape, things that were not there when Wilkins traveled in 1849.

Based on his descriptions, and on the comparison of early maps with contemporary maps and digital sources, I located most of the specific details in his watercolors. Observing rock formations, named landmarks, particular landscape profiles and topography, it was possible to identify at least the areas and general locations if not the precise places. While some locations were easy to recognize, it was startling to see how other landscapes had changed almost

beyond recognition. Larger features such as mountain ridges, topographic qualities and the general lay of the land fit Wilkin's records most of the time, but many details had simply disappeared. The effects of natural erosion are evident in some of the rock formations Wilkins noted, but it is significantly the effects of human activity that have marked the biggest differences. Aside from the obvious architectural incursions—notwithstanding the trail itself as an initial architectural structure—from the fence posts to the pilons and buildings, human activity is in evidence even in the most remote places.

The effects of industry and agriculture are significant too; land divisions and extractions present themselves in every direction. Prior to settlement the plains were largely treeless, and the introduction of European and Asian trees has radically changed the landscapes west of the Missouri River. The rivers along which Wilkins traveled are now all flowing at a massively reduced capacity and water use has become a protracted political question everywhere. These factors while enlarging an understanding of the context, have also compounded a sense of the panorama as a representation of a lost landscape. The places James Wilkins saw no longer exist; they are utterly altered on every level by the cumulative effects of human activity.

### **Journeying into the Archives**

My intentions in exploring the contemporary landscape were to collect details while holding on to Wilkins's experience as a lens. I was able to develop a stronger understanding of the man and his art by examining his journal, biography, archival sources, the watercolor studies, and the other extant paintings. [5]

The visual qualities that might have been witnessed in the panorama can perhaps be hinted at in the thirteen paintings that reside in Missouri History Museum in St. Louis. These paintings also offer an insight into the artist's likeness. Wilkins was known for his portrait work and amongst the thirteen paintings are six portraits including one of Elizabeth Wilkins, his second wife, and a self-portrait. There are three paintings representing rather bucolic narrative scenes; the catalog entries succinctly describe their content: *House by Stream*; *Bird Snaring*; and *Wilkins Homestead at Shobonier, Illinois*. The latter depicts a white, Quaker style, four-square house. A modest group of outbuildings forms a background, the house is foregrounded by a neatly laid out garden with white picket fences. This image alone perhaps gives an indication of the qualities of Wilkins's life. There is no precise date ascribed to this painting so it is unclear if this well-appointed home was made possible through the proceeds from his panorama or if this was indeed his home before he departed. In September 2017, having visited Shobonier, IL and searched

the records library in Vandalia, IL, my attempts to locate the house and family grave sites came to nothing.

Interwoven with my exploration of the landscapes was a series of visits to trail museums, national heritage sites and historical collections. Many of the locations included reproductions of Wilkins watercolors incorporated into interpretation displays. Wilkins's panorama, in many respects, was as an anticipation of road-trip tourism; it is arguable that Wilkins really did "See America First." By no means conclusive, and as one iteration of many, this practical study of the formal qualities offered by Wilkins's panorama continue to offer ways to conceptually locate and connect details across vast spatial and temporal distances.

In the months preceding my own journey, I broadened my searches to materials in the Newberry Library in Chicago. The Newberry collections have provided extensive contextual details of the trails and associated landscapes through other nineteenth century accounts. The period leading up to 1849 is rich with details including hand written journals, guide books for travelers and their associated maps, land survey records maps and documentation that relate to topographic and geological assessments. [6] I became greatly interested in understanding the changing narratives of these landscapes over time.

Wilkins's motivations to travel to the west stand in contradistinction to the majority who braved the mass migration of 1849 and after. Rather than gold Wilkins was perhaps aiming for an artistic fortune. Wilkins, by his own declaration and public reputation, is the first artist to have traveled and recorded the emigrant trail. [7] He vividly articulated his thinking, experiences and rationales in his journal, and in a final series of entries under the heading "Lecture Notes," there is an explication of why he felt so compelled to endure the journey. His text acknowledges accounts of the landscape by Farnam, Freemont, Bryant and Emery. He then connects his work to these pioneers by impressing upon the reader how his "pictorial representation" comes with an authenticity that had never been previously achieved of this subject. A panorama of the Gila River route had been "painted by some-one [*sic*] who had never seen the country, merely from the published prints, with what success I leave to the public to imagine." Referring to his own panorama, he asserts, "This then is the first time that this great hidden storehouse of nature's beauties is bought to view." [8] Wilkins is legibly driven by the importance of achieving a truth to nature, bringing an intrinsic artistic value to the task where he felt it was lacking. He understood the importance of the times in which he was living, and embraced the task with a strong sense of personal responsibility, aware of his contributions as extending the work of previous decades.

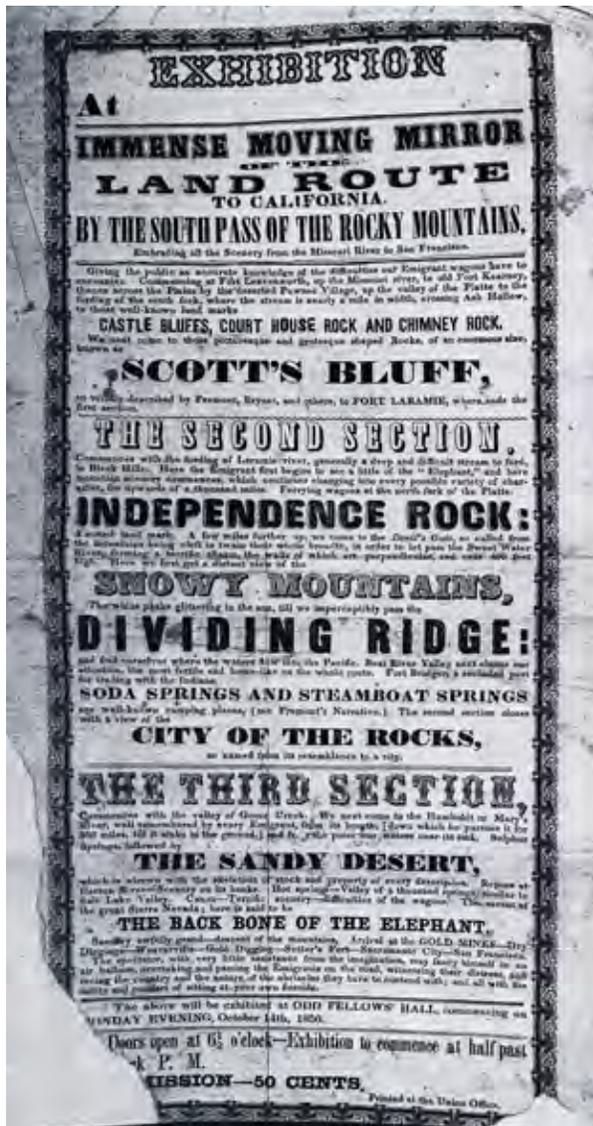


Figure 1. Playbill, 1850, The State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, MO.

The drive for personal gain or individual success is hard to verify, but as the impresario of his own panorama the possibility of making a deferred fortune must have been in his thoughts. Wilkins's panorama, the *Immense Moving Mirror of The Land Route to California*, was completed in September 1850. [9] To carry out the work he moved to a studio in Peoria, Illinois, and remarkably completed the work in just over six months. The premiere took place, in Peoria, IL, on September 18, 1850, receiving much acclaim. [10] While the exact statistics are unknown, given the physical length, number of performances (with narrative accompanying the visual presentation) and extent of its presentation, records indicate that he continued to exhibit it

for about two years in venues across the Midwest and eastern United States. [11]

The particular qualities of the performance are largely obscured. Accounts of the panorama in performance are scant, based only on the briefest of newspaper reports. [12] The painted scrolls of the panorama are presumed lost and most of the watercolor studies were dispersed and thought to have disappeared also. Pointing to the ephemeral nature of panoramas from this time, John Frances McDermott writes, "panoramas were theatre business rather than art, they disappeared when their power of attraction waned and often left their only traces in a few newspaper notices." [13]

The surviving artifacts do provide a unique opportunity for insightful speculation into the panorama in process, as it was being made. In the watercolor sketches and the journal are Wilkins's thoughts and motivations, as described above, alongside pragmatic details of the journey. It is generally cited that Wilkins produced around two hundred watercolors. This number is based on hashtag-like markings that he made while writing his journal. A mark indicating an image was placed in the margin next to the narrative sequence to which it corresponds. These hashtag annotations suggest a regularity and consistency in the way Wilkins worked. About two thirds of the way through, however, the visual record of the journey is interrupted. The fifty remaining watercolors illustrate the trail from Fort Leavenworth, Missouri to Soda Springs, Idaho, stopping short of one of the most spectacular landscapes in the whole journey, at the City of the Rocks. [14] Based on Wilkins's notations there appears to have been ten or eleven watercolors made while journeying through that area, in what is now southern Idaho, five of which are associated with his writing on the City of Rocks.

"Monday 13 Aug<sup>t</sup>

...we encamped at the city of the rocks, # # a noted place from the granite # rocks rising abruptly out of the ground. gives them the appearance of a city. I took several Sketches of them [sic]." [15]

It becomes tempting to imagine the description of this landscape in the panorama. When following the course of the trail through the present-day national reserve, the rock formations reveal themselves in three main vistas and a series of viewpoints. The playbill indicates that the second section of the panorama closes with a "View of the CITY OF THE ROCKS," adding emphasis to suggest this was a place of significance [16] The peak immigration season in the early 1850s was in July and August, when The City of Rocks would become one of the busiest trail locations on the California route. According to the National Reserve website, 52,000 people traveled through this location in 1852. [17] As a landscape that is now significantly less traveled and also much less well known, evidence of the gold rush years has remained relatively well preserved. The trail itself is visible in a couple of places as a line of wheel

ruts, and there are many dated signatures left on the rock formations by travelers themselves.

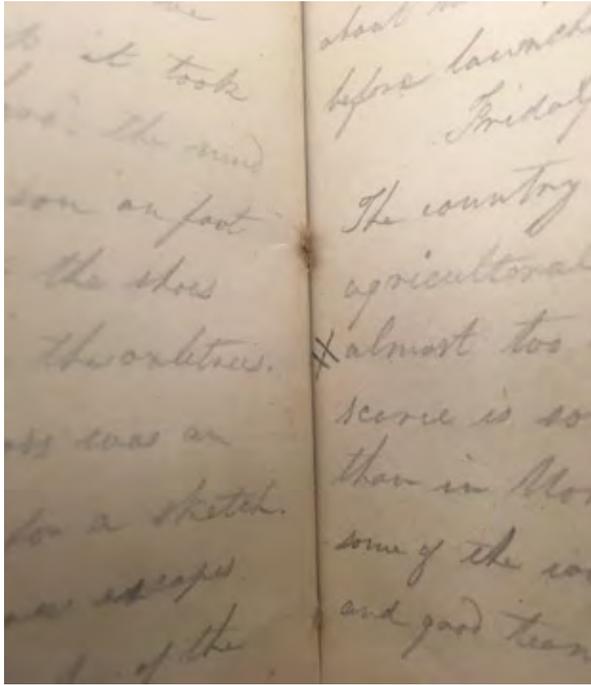


Figure 2. Detail showing, James Wilkins’s hash-tag mark to indicate a watercolor painting was made. The mark appears to reference Image 7, *Undulating Prairies*. James F. Wilkins. *Journal of overland trip from St Louis MO to Sacramento CA. Via the California Trail*. 1849, May 7 – October 6. [HM 27511] The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

But what of the performance itself—what kind of a presenter was Wilkins? If the tone of his writing can be a guide there is an even, pragmatic quality in the text. He wrote in pencil and his hand is presentable, neat and legible throughout. An objective but well humored conversational tone pervades the narrative. He is sometimes jocular, relaying anomalies and peculiarities with a sense of irony. The language feels measured and thoughtful which might suggest he was being mindful of its application in the spoken portion of the exhibition. In evidence from his notes and from the playbill, Wilkins’s panorama was scripted in three reels, each section was devised with a dramatic ending.

### Panorama in Three Acts

Section one opens on the Missouri River and concludes at *Scott’s Bluff*, a present-day national heritage site at Gering on the western edge of Nebraska. This section takes in a series of landmarks that he depicted in the watercolor sketches, places that are maintained now as national heritage sites, notably, *Courthouse and Jail Rock* and *Chimney Rock* in Nebraska. The initial ten watercolors

depict the journey along the Missouri River, showing some modestly established settlements, prairie farms and light industry. The first image is of *Fort Leavenworth*, which founded in 1827, remains active today as the longest standing continuously operated army post west of the District of Columbia.



Figure 3. James Wilkins, *1. Fort Leavenworth*. 1849. James Wilkins Collection. PH 374 (5) Box A. Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI.

Images two through ten show a range of settled and farmed landscapes. Domestic and working buildings are represented at Weston, which at that time was an important steamboat port. Some of the existing buildings in Weston can be identified from the watercolor. Next, at the mouth of the Nodaway Creek, a powerful tributary to the Missouri River, a mill is represented, apparently a lumber-mill; Wilkins has included what appear to be sawn logs on the shoreline.

Entry into the plains, which also marked the departure from the United States, was at old Fort Kearny, close to present day Nebraska City. The Platte River confluence is further north but Wilkins appears to have cut across the land to the north-west, joining the Platte somewhere west of present-day Grand Island. All the trails—the Mormon, California, Oregon and Overland—converge along the Platte, making it one of the busiest and widest sections. Wilkins’s narrative then takes him west along the southern banks of the Platte to New Fort Kearny, near the present-day city of Kearney. Watercolor “13. *Crossing The South Platte*,” depicts the wide horizontality of this particular environment; it shows a place near present day Brule.

Along the Platte River today it is rare to obtain such a wide-open view on the river. The river’s flow is much reduced and the shorelines of the many channels of the Platte river are now quite deeply wooded. A vista, like the one depicted by Wilkins, is mostly to be gained from one of the bridges that cross the Platte, none of which existed in Wilkins’s day. A chance conversation with a landowner close to Grand Island directed me to look for places where a recent tornado had denuded the shoreline, but he was also quick to add the much-reduced water levels mean that it is now not possible at all to see the river as it might have appeared in the 1840s. In Wilkins’s composition the open space and scale is emphasized by the position of a low horizon line; everything is belittled by the sky. The scale is

confirmed by the detailed representation of a wagon train with haulage animals and human figures, a feature found in most of his images.

The second section of the panorama begins as the trail leaves Scotts Bluff. Here travelers would make a steady and almost imperceptible incline toward the continental divide. At first, following the course of the north branch of the Platte River, Wilkins's route takes a north westerly direction, near present day Casper, traversing the continental divide by the south pass. The route known as the *south pass* crosses a breathtakingly wide-open plane, situated about forty miles south of the Wind River Range of the Rocky Mountains, which are visible to the north. The drama in the narrative here might have focused on the bleak, exposed, tundra-like quality of the landscape. While the white peaks of the Rocky Mountains are visible, they are not at all visually dominant. Reaching the continental divide itself does not involve a spectacular or dramatic climb to a peaked mountain ridge. Today the journey from there into the Green River valley is extremely lonely and remote; the irony here is that there were likely to have been more travelers in the area in the late 1840s than there might be on any given day there today.



Figure 4. James Wilkins, 34. *Trail towards south pass July 13<sup>th</sup>. 1849.* James Wilkins Collection. PH 374 (5) Box C. Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI.

In the collection at the Missouri History Museum in St. Louis there are three landscape paintings by James Wilkins which seem to offer potentially misleading information. One is cataloged as *Immigrants Night Camp* with no particular location noted, while the other two each show a wagon train snaking through an un-named mountain pass. The catalog entries for these two paintings offer the following as titles: *Immigrants in the Rockies* and *Covered Wagons in the Rockies*. Paintings depicting this subject matter were popular following the gold rush. There is no evidence to suggest that Wilkins ever traversed a path

resembling the ones depicted in the Rocky Mountains himself. Wilkins's paintings more strongly resemble the Carson Pass in the Sierra Nevada. Given his previous plea for authenticity, these images stand out as anomalous and may have been commissions.

A fourth painting associated with this group, *Leaving the Old Homestead*, functions as a link between these western subjects and those of a more bucolic nature made while 'at home' in Illinois. It illustrates a departure and has the feeling of being almost autobiographical. With narrative qualities reminiscent of Hogarth, Wilkins depicts here the departure of an émigré. With all the pathos deserving of such a moment, like the three trail paintings this also feels like the artist is taking license rather than striving for an authentic record.

The third section of the panorama takes in a number of the most inhospitable landscapes of the whole journey. From the City of Rocks the trail follows Goose Creek to the Humboldt river and into the area known as the *Forty Mile Desert*. This vast and inhospitable geological basin is also known as the Humboldt sink; the Humboldt river drains and disappears there. Present day Interstate Highway 80 follows the route of the California trail across Nevada to Carson City. The environment on this stretch is dangerously dry and hot most of the year. Coupled with the extreme dryness, the alkalinity of the ground makes water sources toxic. The water of the river forms an expansive seasonal shallow lake that is edged with caustic hot springs, and most of the year water sits a few feet below a hard, pale, crusty surface. Haulage animals and humans alike perished in great numbers and in 1850 a survey located 953 human grave sites.



Figure 5. Nicholas Lowe, *Alkalai flats. South of interstate 80 along state highway 95 Nevada. Smoke from California obscuring the view in the 40 Mile Desert. October 11 2017.* Windsor and Newton watercolor (series 1.) Payne's Gray on 300g canson paper.

Animals were typically cut loose and left to roam, many goods were discarded, and proceeding on foot meant carrying only enough water to reach the Carson river. Gusts of wind frequently whip dust off the ground in clouds giving the air a caustic quality that burns the eyes and smarts the skin. Once at the Carson River travelers of the 1850s would pick up their route to California, by one of the mountain passes. Wilkins crossed the Sierra Nevada via the Carson Pass.

Traveling through the Sierra Nevada to reach the gold fields area is still a seasonal crossing and not without its risks now as then. In 1849 crossing the Sierra Nevada had already gained a significant notoriety based on the winter tragedy of 1846-7. Famously the Donner-Reed party became stranded and largely perished on the Truckee River route, which crosses the Sierras further north. Wilkins's experience is communicated on the playbill by these remarks, "The ascent of the great Sierra Nevada; here is said to be THE BACK BONE OF THE ELEPHANT. Scenery awfully grand – descent of the mountains." [18]

As the road drops in elevation travelers to this day enter the lush forests and river valleys of California, in stark contrast to the mountain passes and to the deserts in Nevada. Wilkins at this point becomes wistful and then complains about the high prices being asked for food and lodging. From the foothills near present day Placerville the road to Sacramento is today relatively easy. Towards the end of the journey, if the journal can be taken as a guide, the veracity of Wilkins's descriptive writing seems to peter out. The entries take on a shorter form becoming more note like. This is iterated also in the way the closing narrative is announced on the playbill. There is the impression of getting through the last details of the story because it must be done. The closing sequence in the playbill narrates as follows: "Arrival at the GOLD MINES-Dry Diggings-Weaverville-Gold Digging-Sutters Fort-Sacramento-San Francisco." The playbill text closes with the following reassuring narration:

"The spectator, with very little assistance from the imagination may fancy himself in an air balloon overtaking and passing the emigrants on the road witnessing their distress, and seeing the country and the nature of the obstacles they have contended with; and all with the safety and comfort of sitting at your own fireside." [19]

Wilkins continued to San Francisco presumably by road, bringing the story around to a final entry that notes his arrival back in St. Louis on February 2, 1850. [20] Amongst the details in the penultimate narrative entry for October 2<sup>nd</sup> are the last two hashtag markings situated in relation to descriptions of redwood trees and then the appearance of oak trees in the lower elevations. [21] There are no other indications that he made observations of either the city of Sacramento or San Francisco, or of the journey in between, even though the playbill seems to indicate this was included in the panorama. Either way it now remains unknowable.

## Notes

1. B.R. Buckelew, *The Californian*, San Francisco, March 15 1848.
2. James F. Wilkins. *Journal of overland trip from St Louis MO to Sacramento CA. Via the California Trail*. 1849, May 7 – October 6. [HM 27511] The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

3. The watercolors and some biographical ephemera are kept at the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison, WI.

4. The Grand Moving Panorama of California was created by Dr. L. E. Emerson in 1853, representing a narrative of the California Gold Rush; the surviving artifact of this panorama is its script. An interpretative recreation was made in 2010 by the Velaslavasay Panorama. The 270-foot-long moving panorama provides great insights into the form of moving image panoramas, the physical properties, and the mechanical details, and construction. "Grand Moving Mirror of California." The Velaslavasay Panorama. Accessed November 4, 2019.

<https://panoramaonview.org/major-projects/grand-moving-mirror-california>.

5. John Francis McDermott, "Gold Rush Movies." *California Historical Society Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (1954).; J.F. McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas of The Mississippi. Paintings by the mile – the story of the newsreel-travelogue-documentary "movie" of the nineteenth century.* (The University of Chicago Press, 1958).; J.F. McDermott, *An Artist On The Overland Trail – The 1849 diary and sketchbook of James F. Wilkins.* (The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA. 1968).

6. See also, Joseph E Ware – *The Emigrants Guide To California, 1849*; Hosea B. Horne – *Horn's overland guide, 1852*; Andrew Child – *Overland route to California, 1848*; John Steele – *The traveler's companion. 1854.*

7. Topographic and geological aspects of the landscape had been recorded previously in the service of surveys for mapping and prospecting. As art in its own terms, Wilkins does appear to have been the 'first' to have made visual and narrative record.

8. J.F. McDermott, 1968. 80.

9. Wilkins returned to St. Louis in 1850 to find his wife and children had been taken by cholera, and his house in Shobonier to have been sold to cover costs. Wilkins left no record of his feelings in respect of this tragedy. It appears that he began working immediately on the panorama. (See J. F. McDermott, 1954, 32.) Wilkins returned to Shobonier, IL and at some point remarried, as is indicated by the census records from 1870. Documentation is in files relating to James Wilkins at the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI.

10. J.F. McDermott 1954. 32.

11. A brief news report from Milwaukee dated 18 April 1851 claims that James Wilkins's panorama was 3600ft. long. It is more likely that it was around 450ft. Wilkins panorama was produced in three sections and consistent with other panoramas of this kind each reel would hold up to about 150ft of painted canvas.

12. The archives of the Wisconsin Historical Society hold a number of files relating to James Wilkins including photocopies of newspaper clippings from 1850 and 1851. The State Historical Society of Missouri, in Columbia, holds a playbill advertisement for James Wilkins's *Immense*

*Moving Mirror of the Land Route to California*. dated 1850, printed in St. Louis, MO.

13. J. F. McDermott, 1954. 31.

14. The City of Rocks in Idaho is now under the management of City of Rocks National Reserve ID and Castle Rocks State Park. Wilkins is credited with having coined the name of The City Of Rocks. See; <https://www.nps.gov/ciro/index.htm>.

<https://parksandrecreation.idaho.gov/parks/castle-rocks>.

15. J.F. McDermott, 1968. 63.

16. *Playbill*, 1850, The State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, MO.

17.

<https://www.nps.gov/ciro/learn/historyculture/index.htm>

18. For more on allusions to 'the elephant' in trail documentation, see a featured article on the California Trail Interpretative Center in Elko Nevada website at <http://www.californiatrailcenter.org/the-elephant/>. See also, Shirley Sargent, Seeking the Elephant, 1849. James M Hutchings Overland Journal 1980.

19. *Playbill*, 1850, The State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, MO.

20. J.F. McDermott, 1968. 79.

21. Ibid.78.

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Wilkins J.F. Journal of overland trip from St Louis MO to Sacramento CA. Via the California Trail. 1849, May 7 - October 6. [HM 27511] The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

Wilkins J.F. Fifty watercolor drawings/paintings, Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison, WI.

Wilkins J.F. Thirteen paintings, Missouri History Museum, St Louis, MO.

1931-073-0008 Grandmother's Girls

1931-073-0009 Young Girl

1931-073-0009 Girl With Gloves

1957-018-0001 Virginia & Ingham Wood (with book)

1961-073-0001 Self Portrait

1961-073-0002 Mrs. James F. Wilkins

1961-073-0003 Leaving the Old Homestead

1961-073-0004 Immigrants Night Camp

1961-073-0005 Immigrants in the Rockies

1961-073-0006 Bird Snaring

1961-073-0007 Wilkins Homestead at Shobonier, Illinois

1961-075-0001 Covered Wagons in the Rockies

1986-130-0002 House by Stream

State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia MO.  
Playbill dated 1850, probably printed in St. Louis, MO.

The Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI. File photocopies of newspaper articles from 1850 and 1851.

## Author Biography

Nicholas Lowe is an interdisciplinary artist, curator, author, and teacher. Significant curatorial projects include *goat island archive – we have discovered the performance by making it* (2019) and *Roger Brown: Calif U.S.A.* (2010). His visual and performance works explore archival detail and museum display contexts as research-based iterative practices. Lowe joined the faculty at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2003 and is Chair of the Department of Historic Preservation. His exhibition and teaching career includes engagements in the United Kingdom, France, Germany and the United States.

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