



**INVENTORY TO
THE CHARLES ALEXANDRE LESUEUR
COLLECTION OF WORKS OF ART
ON PAPER, CIRCA 1800-1846**

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Revised: Sammie Morris, 2006

Adriana Harmeyer, 2017

Compiled By: Sammie Morris, Archivist

Descriptive Summary

Creator	Lesueur, Charles Alexandre, 1778-1846
Title	Charles Alexandre Lesueur Collection of Works of Art on Paper
Collection Identifier	MSP 130
Date Span	Circa 1800-1846
Abstract	Works of art on paper, including pencil, pastel, charcoal and watercolor sketches by artist and naturalist Charles Alexandre Lesueur, Virginia Dupalais, and Lucy Sistare [Say].
Quantity	43 items
Language	English
Repository	Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Purdue University Libraries

Administrative Information

Location Information	ASC
Access Restrictions	Collection is open for research.
Preferred Citation	MSP 130, Charles Alexandre Lesueur Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Purdue University Libraries
Processed By	Sammie Morris, 2006

Biography of Charles Alexandre Lesueur

Artist and naturalist Charles Alexandre Lesueur was born on January 1, 1778 in Le Havre, France. The son of a French naval officer, Lesueur attended the School of Hydrography where he learned draughtsmanship and applied graphic techniques. In 1800, at age twenty-three, Lesueur sailed from his home at Le Havre, France, on an expedition to Australia and Tasmania. He had been hired by Commander Nicolas Baudin to pictorially document the journey, drawing the various specimens and species they would encounter. As the journey progressed, Lesueur became more of a specialist in drawing animals. He began a friendship with the zoologist on board, Francois Péron. Under Péron's guidance, Lesueur learned the art of taxidermy, along with the importance of color and attention to detail. Apart from completing drawings of many animals, he produced a variety of landscapes often including aspects of indigenous Australian culture. Péron would sometimes distract the indigenous Australians while Lesueur sketched them. During the four-year expedition, Lesueur and naturalist François Péron collected approximately 100,000 zoological specimens representing 2,500 new species, and Lesueur made 1,500 drawings.

In 1804, after the expedition ended, Lesueur returned to France. He and Péron began work to publish the results of the expedition. When the two presented their large and impressive collection, the professors at the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris were very excited. Lesueur worked on producing watercolors from the sketches he had done in Australia and he exhibited some of the works at the Muséum.

In 1806, the Emperor Napoleon gave permission for Lesueur and Péron to publish their findings in a journal to be called *Voyage de découvertes aux Terres Australes*, written by Péron and illustrated with forty plates by Lesueur. They were issued a pension to support them as they worked on it. The first volume appeared in 1807, and included many of Lesueur's drawings. Before the second volume was completed, Péron became ill and died in 1810. The directorship of the project was taken over by map maker and surveyor Louis de Freychinet. The second volume was eventually published in 1816.

After the fall of Napoleon and the collapse of his Empire in 1815, Lesueur may have become worried that he would lose his pension. Having published a few articles in scientific magazines between 1813 and 1815, Lesueur joined geologist William Maclure on a study tour of the United States. His journeys took him from the islands of the West Indies to the Great Lakes of North America. He traveled widely in Pennsylvania, New York, and New England from 1817 to 1828. Lesueur is believed to be the first to study the fish of the Great American Lakes and the first to illustrate many other animals in the United States. After traveling together, William Maclure persuaded Lesueur to join him in Philadelphia. Lesueur was one of the founders of the Academy of Natural Sciences at Philadelphia. He remained in the city, working as an art instructor, for almost ten years, during which time he established a reputation as a naturalist, engraver, and teacher of drawing.

In 1825, Maclure and Robert Owen persuaded Lesueur to join them at New Harmony, their newly founded commune in Indiana. Lesueur left along with other intellectuals and artists for

Indiana aboard Maclure's "Boatload of Knowledge" in 1825, arriving in New Harmony in early 1826. There, except for his occasional travels, he remained until 1837, teaching and lecturing on art, sketching for scientific purposes, and participating in archaeological explorations. During his stay at New Harmony, Lesueur made numerous sketches, some of which have been published in the Journals of the Academy at Philadelphia. Lesueur also published works on natural history. One highlight of his years in New Harmony was a visit of Maximilian, Prince of Wied-Neuwied (Germany), and artist Karl Bodmer in 1832-1933.

Among Lesueur's art pupils was his niece Virginia Dupalais, for whom he acted as parental guardian. Lucy Sistare [Say], wife of Thomas Say, also taught drawing in the school at New Harmony with Lesueur. Although he received no income for his work, Lesueur was able to live off a pension he received from the French government for his scientific data and specimens he sent back from America. Lesueur became the most eminent artist in the state of Indiana at the time. He is thought to be the first artist to sketch extensively the scenes of western Indiana. His sketches and drawings along the Ohio River and at New Harmony document daily life of the 1820s and 1830s in the region. Lesueur is also recognized as one of the pioneers of lithography (the art of writing or drawing on stone, and of printing the in the United States.

In 1837, following the demise of the New Harmony commune, Lesueur returned to France by way of New Orleans. In 1844, he was awarded the silver medal from the Société libre des Beau-Arts in Paris. In recognition of a lifetime devoted to scientific research he was appointed Chevalier de l'Ordre Royal de la Légion d'Honneur. In 1846, Lesueur was appointed curator of the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle du Havre (Museum of Natural History at Le Havre, France), which was created to house his many drawings and paintings. The majority of his art work remains part of the Le Havre Museum's collection today. Lesueur died in France on December 12, 1846. He is buried at Le Havre.

Sources: Peat, Wilbur D. *Pioneer Painters of Indiana*. Indianapolis, IN: Art Association of Indianapolis, 1954. Elliott, Josephine Mirabella and Jane Thompson Johansen. *Charles-Alexandre Lesueur: Premier Naturalist and Artist*, c. 1999.

Scope and Contents of the Collection

The Charles Alexandre Lesueur Collection (circa 1800-1846; 43 items) contains twenty-six pencil, pastel, charcoal and watercolor sketches on paper by Lesueur. Many of the sketches document life in New Harmony, Indiana, and these works are most likely dated according to Lesueur's stay in Indiana, from 1826 to 1837. Some of the works date prior to 1826, when Lesueur resided in France. The collection also includes seventeen pencil and watercolor sketches attributed to Virginia Dupalais, Lesueur's niece and pupil who lived with him in New Harmony, or Lucy Sistare [Say], a fellow artist teaching at New Harmony.

The collection is organized into seven series:

1. New Harmony People and Scenes by Lesueur, circa 1826-1837 (11 items)
2. New Harmony Sketches Attributed to Lesueur, circa 1826-1837 (2 items)
3. French People and Scenes by Lesueur, circa 1800-1846 (5 items)
4. Landscapes by Lesueur, circa 1800-1846 (2 items)
5. Animal Sketches by Lesueur, circa 1800-1846 (5 items)
6. Miscellaneous Sketches by Lesueur, circa 1800-1846 (1 item)
7. New Harmony and Related Sketches Attributed to Virginia Dupalais or Lucy Sistare [Say], circa 1826-1837 (17 items)

Dimensions provided for each item are height then width, in inches, of the entire page on which the sketch appears. Accompanying mounting dimensions are not provided.

Revision History

Updated Administrative Information and Descriptive Summary; added item CL 4-2, previously unprocessed, as of May 16, 2017.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION

New Harmony People and Scenes by Lesueur, ca. 1826-1837 (11 items)

Box 1 Contents

Item:

- CL 1-1 Four sepia watercolor sketches mounted together. (12" X 18")
New Harmony scene, man working at fence.
Drawing room scene, four people around a piano.
Mountain scene with man and dog.
Mt. Vernon-New Harmony road, according to tradition.
- CL 1-2 Major Phillips peeling potatoes. Pencil sketch. (7" X 10 ½")
- CL 1-3 Major Phillips pulling a cart. Pencil sketch. (6" X 9 ½")
- CL 1-4 Three pencil sketches of men of the New Harmony community,
mounted together.
Man sitting at a table. (6 ½" X 6")
Elderly man seated with cane. (6 ½" X 6")
Man working with farm equipment [?]. (4" X 4")
- CL 1-5 Woman sleeping (New Harmony community). Black pencil on
cream paper. (6" X 4")
- CL 1-6 Man carrying buckets of water with yoke on his shoulders.
Black pencil on cream paper. (9 ½" X 7 ½")

New Harmony Sketches Attributed to Lesueur, ca. 1826-1837 (2 items)

Item:

- CL 2-1 Fauntleroy at New Harmony. Black pencil on cream paper.
(9" X 6")
- CL 2-2 Thomas Say [?]. Brown, black, and white charcoal sketch on
light brown paper. (10" X 9 ½")

French People and Scenes by Lesueur, ca. 1800-1846 (5 items)

Item:

- CL 3-1 Two pencil sketches of prominent Frenchmen of Vincennes on
one page. (11" X 14")
Colonel [Francis?] Vigo
Mr. [Jean?] Badollet

- CL 3-2 Joseph Barabino, prominent Frenchman of Vincennes. Lithograph. Black on white paper. (13.2" X 10.8").
- CL 3-3 Boys fishing. Early watercolor sketch. Grey on cream paper. (13" X 9 ½")
- CL 3-4 French village scene showing people on horses and horses drinking from fountain. Early watercolor sketch. Grey on cream paper. (8" X 10 ½")

Landscapes by Lesueur, ca. 1800-1846 (2 items)

Item:

- CL 4-1 Roadside scenery between Philadelphia and the Ohio River showing trees and bridge in foreground and church in background. Black pencil on cream paper. (9 ½" X 12 ½")
- CL 4-2 Mountain scenery, probably in Western Pennsylvania on the way to New Harmony. Black pencil on cream paper. Partial sketch of mother and child on verso. (13 ½" X 15 ½")

Animal Sketches by Lesueur, ca. 1800-1846 (5 items)

Item:

- CL 5-1 American wild turkey. Black pencil on cream paper. (9" X 12")
- CL 5-2 American birds. Watercolor on cream paper. (12" X 10")
- CL 5-3 Tropical bird, probably a sketch made on expedition. Black pencil on cream paper. Partial bird sketch on verso. (9" X 11 ½")
- CL 5-4 Family of mice. Watercolor sketch. (6" X 9")
- CL 5-5 Two native cats of Australia, feeding on prey. Color lithograph. [Writing on front: "Nouvelle-Hollande: Ile King. Dasyure De Lacepede. Dasyurus Cepedianus N. De l'imprimerie de Langlois."] (9 ½" X 12 ½")

Miscellaneous Sketches by Lesueur, ca. 1800-1846 (1 item)

Item:

- CL 6-1 "Jacque Balma dit Mont-Blanc" [man on a snowy mountain top with pole.] Watercolor sketch. (12" X 9")

New Harmony and Related Sketches Attributed to Virginia Dupalais or Lucy Sistare [Say], ca. 1826-1837 (17 items)

- Item:**
- CL 7-1 Portrait of a man reading (possibly William Polham, one of the first editors of the *New Harmony Gazette*). Pencil sketch. (9" X 6")
- CL 7-2 Small dilapidated building in New Harmony. Pencil sketch. (6" X 9")
- CL 7-3 Portrait of a man at New Harmony (possibly German traveler Karl Postl or Prince Maximilian of Wied). Charcoal sketch. (8 ½" X 6")
- CL 7-4 Fauntleroy on his deathbed. Pencil rubbing of original in the Fauntleroy House in New Harmony. (6" X 5 ½")
- CL 7-5 Portrait of a man in the New Harmony community. Partial sketch of woman's profile on verso. Pencil sketch. (10" X 8.1")
- CL 7-6 Women sewing at New Harmony. Pencil sketch. (10" X 8")
- CL 7-7 Wild roses in bloom. Watercolor and pencil sketch in color. (9 ½" X 8")
- CL 7-8 Portrait of Frances Wright. Pencil sketch. (8" X 7")
- CL 7-9 Woman seated and looking out a window with her head down. Pencil sketch, probably made in Philadelphia en route to New Harmony. (8" X 6")
- CL 7-10 Yellow American bird. Color watercolor sketch on vellum [?]. (13" X 10 ½")
- CL 7-11 Two pencil sketches of members of the New Harmony community, mounted together.
Portrait of unknown man. (8" X 6")
Woman seated with another woman's head resting in her lap. (5" X 5")
- CL 7-12 Portrait of Madame [Marie] Fretageot. Charcoal sketch on blue paper. Sketch of elderly man on verso. (9" X 5 ½")
- CL 7-13 A man in the New Harmony community. Pencil sketch. (9" X 6")

CL 7-14 Two color pastel sketches of American birds, mounted together.
 Reddish-brown bird. (12" X 9")
 Blue bird. (12" X 9")

SUBJECT HEADINGS

Persons

Lesueur, Charles Alexandre, 1778-1846
Dupalais, Virginia
Say, Lucy Way Sistare, 1801-1886
Say, Thomas, 1787-1834
Fauntleroy, Robert Henry, 1806-1849
Barabino, Joseph
Balma, Jacque
Wright, Frances, 1795-1852
Fretageot, Marie Duclos, 1783-1833
Vigo, Francis, 1747-1836
Badollet, John, 1758-1837
Pelham, William, 1759-1827
Sealsfield, Charles, 1793-1864
Wied, Maximilian, Prinz von, 1782-1867

Organizations

Museum d'histoire naturelle du Havre

Topics

Scientific expeditions
Biological illustration
Naturalists—France
Collective settlements—Indiana—New Harmony

Geographic Places

Indiana—In art
New Harmony (Ind.)
Le Havre (France)
Vincennes (France)
Ohio River
Australia

Form and Genre Types

Sketches
Pencil works
Charcoal drawings
Pastels (Visual works)
Watercolors
Lithographs
Landscape drawings

Occupations

Artists

Painting
Authors
Scientists
Explorers