

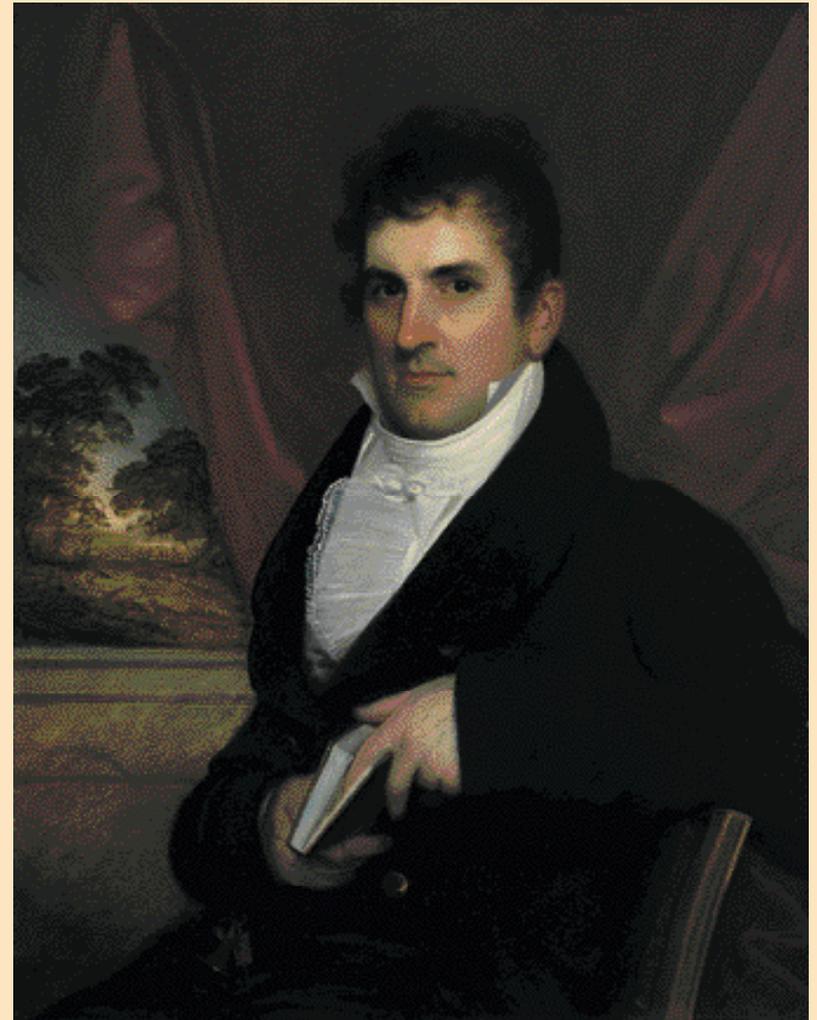
I notice. . .



**John Wesley Jarvis (1780–1840)**  
 Philip Hone, 1809  
 Oil on wood panel, 34 x 26¾ in. (86.4 x 67.9 cm)  
 Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd  
 1986.84



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I wonder. . .



# Philip Hone

19TH-CENTURY AMERICA

## Your Historic Compass:

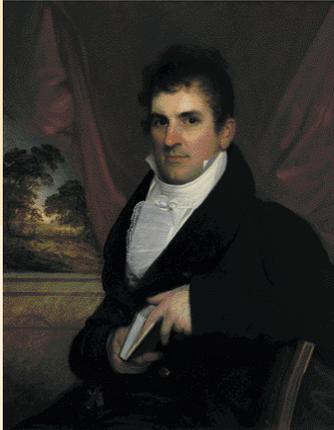
“Hone’s leadership guarantees success of Delaware and Hudson Canal.”

When:  
1809, three years after the invention of Fulton’s steamship

Where:  
New York City

Who:  
Philip Hone

What:  
Portrait painting—represents how a person looks or how they want to appear

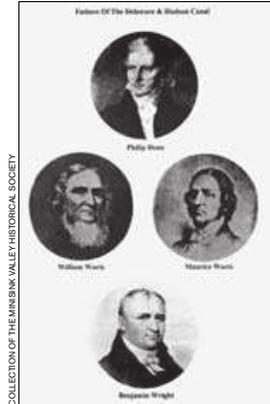


## Looking closely

Philip Hone, seated on a simple wooden chair, pauses momentarily in his reading to greet the viewer. With his arm balanced across the back of the chair, he sits in an informal manner. The pastoral landscape seen just beyond the red curtain adds an intimate quality to the portrait. However, the artist is careful to depict his patron with a commanding presence. Hone’s sharp nose, strong chin, piercing eyes, and rosy cheeks convey a sense of character and vitality. His crisp white collar and ruffled shirt suggest that he is a man of means. Hone’s large black coat adds a sense of weight to the composition and emphasizes his dark eyes and unflinching gaze.

## History connection

Along with his brother John, Philip Hone earned his living by managing the family auction house, one of New York’s most lucrative establishments. The business was so profitable that in 1821 Hone retired at the age of forty-one. Hone then pursued a career in politics, becoming the mayor of New York City in 1825. During his first year in office, Hone presided over the opening festivities of the Erie Canal that connected the Great



Here Mr. Hone appears with the Wurts brothers and Benjamin Wright who engineered both the Erie Canal and the Delaware and Hudson Canal.

Lakes to the Hudson River. This new waterway greatly decreased the cost of shipping.

Politically, Hone was influential in the organization of the **Whig party**. He was friends with both John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay. Today Philip Hone is best known for the detailed personal diary that he kept between 1828 and 1851.

Throughout this diary, Hone made notations regarding the financing and planning of the Delaware and Hudson Canal. The Wurts brothers had first devised the idea of building a canal after discovering coal on their Pennsylvania property in 1814. After the war of 1812, the United States was cut off from British coal supplies. Since coal was in great demand, the Wurtses knew they could turn a large profit if they could ship their coal to New York markets. Shipping large quantities of coal, however, posed a huge transportation problem. The brothers hired the chief engineer of the Erie Canal, Benjamin Wright. Wright designed a 108-mile-long canal system for the Delaware and Hudson. To overcome the 972-foot difference in elevation between the Pennsylvania coalfields and the banks of the Hudson River, the canal also included 108 locks. It is unclear when Philip Hone first became involved with the Delaware and Hudson Canal project. We do know that he served as the first president of the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company formed in 1825. Hone’s reputation and political connections proved invaluable when raising the funds needed to build the canal. Upon completion in 1829, the Delaware and Hudson Canal became the first million-dollar enterprise established in the United States.

## About the artist

John Wesley Jarvis, the artist who painted this portrait, was known throughout New York City as the world’s greatest storyteller. It was even rumored that he kept a baby crocodile in his coat pocket. Jarvis gained his early training as an apprentice to a portrait painter and engraver. During his career, Jarvis was favored by New York’s upper class. He painted some of the city’s most influential residents, Philip Hone among them. He maintained a studio in a large public building that also housed the Customs Office, New-York Historical Society, and the American Academy of Arts. Working from this location, Jarvis placed himself at the center of the city’s financial and artistic activities. When not painting in New York, Jarvis traveled to the South where he frequently visited New Orleans, Richmond, and Charleston. Jarvis’s career began to suffer when the economy declined in the 1820s. In 1834, the artist suffered a stroke, making it impossible for him to paint.

**Whig party:** The Whig party first took shape in 1834. Whigs were generally eastern business people and southern planters who believed the federal government should work to promote the growth of the American economy.



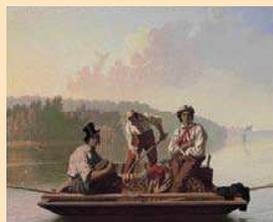
This is a photograph of the Delaware and Hudson Canal. Notice the sturdy gate that holds back the canal water. A pair of gates, such as those seen here, form what is known as a “lock.” By allowing water to flow into or out of the gates, lock operators were able to either lift or lower large barges, such as the one you see waiting in the distance. In this photograph the lock needs to fill with water before the barge enters. Once the barge was safely secured in the lock, water would then be released from the other gate slowly lowering the barge to the lower canal.



I notice . . .



I wonder . . .



**George Caleb Bingham (1811–1879)**  
*Boatmen on the Missouri*, 1846  
Oil on canvas, 25¼ x 30¼ in. (63.8 x 76.8 cm)  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd  
1979.7.15



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# Boatmen on the Missouri

19TH-CENTURY AMERICA

## Your Historic Compass:

“According to Bingham, life along the American frontier promises independence and natural living.”

When:  
1846, the same year Americans living in California declared independence from Mexico

Where:  
Missouri River

Who:  
George Caleb Bingham and Missouri boatmen

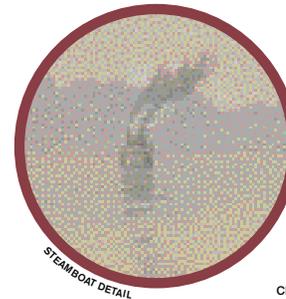
What:  
Genre painting depicting a scene from everyday life



## Looking closely

Men like those depicted in *Boatmen on the Missouri* were commonly seen selling wood to passing steamboats during the 1800s. Boatmen were generally regarded as unsavory and troublesome characters, yet Bingham's boatmen appear well kept and sociable. Their broad shoulders and large arms indicate the physical exertion involved in their work. Though their clothes appear tattered, the artist has removed any trace of dirt from them. Also missing from this painting are the hordes of pesky insects that infested the riverbanks. Picturing the men at ease and free from everyday troubles, *Boatmen on the Missouri* offers an idealized view of life along the river. However, the surface bubbles, and the large branch at the left of the composition suggests the unseen dangers that lie below the river's surface.

While acknowledging the hazards of working on the river, Bingham carefully arranged this composition to express a feeling of ease. The three men form a visual triangle. This construction balances the composition and guides the viewer's attention from figure to figure. The artist painted the background in strictly muted tones, enhancing the luminous quality of the work. These tones sharply contrast with the bright colors used in the boatmen's clothing. A steamboat appears in the



distance. This detail may account for the relatively relaxed nature of the figures. Perhaps they are resting after the activity of a recent sale.

## History connection

Invented in 1807, steamboats greatly increased the speed of river transportation. They also played a crucial role in the settlement of the area acquired in the Louisiana Purchase. The

Missouri River was one of the major waterways in this new territory. Intersecting with the Ohio River, the Missouri River connected the East Coast with the nation's western territories. The Missouri River also connected the North with the South via the Mississippi River. By 1835, steamboats served as the primary means of shipping goods and produce throughout the central United States.

Boatmen played a crucial role in river commerce of the period. By purchasing wood from flatboatmen, steamboats carried less timber on board. Steamboat companies used this extra space for cargo and thereby substantially increased shipping profits. Buying wood from flatboatmen also allowed steamboats to refuel while traveling rather than stopping for fuel. This system cut down on travel time for the steamboat companies. The decrease in travel time provided a valuable competitive edge in the cutthroat shipping business.

The life depicted in Bingham's portrayal of the Missouri boatmen differs sharply from the industrial lifestyles of people in the northeastern part of the United States. Eastern factory laborers worked indoors under poor conditions and for extremely long hours. In contrast, the boatmen's workday followed the commercial activity along the river. Bingham's idealized view of the West offered an alternative to eastern urban living. Images such as *Boatmen on the Missouri* promoted the westward expansion of the United States that was supported by the popular belief in **Manifest Destiny**.

## About the artist

George Caleb Bingham was one of the first well-respected American artists from the western frontier. At the age of eight, Bingham moved with his family to the territory that eventually became the state of Missouri. He spent much of his childhood along the banks of the Missouri River. Bingham was principally a self-taught artist. During his early career, he traveled to New York and Philadelphia to further cultivate his artistic skills. He also spent four years in Washington, D.C., painting portraits. Upon returning to Missouri, Bingham started to paint genre scenes of life along the western frontier. These images were widely circulated as prints. The popularity of these prints heightened Bingham's national acclaim and provided him the financial resources for travel to Paris and Germany. Known nationally as an artist, Bingham also became a local politician. He served in the Missouri State Legislature in 1848 and as state treasurer between 1862 and 1865.



This is an early photograph of the city of Cincinnati taken in 1848. Notice the steamboats docked along the shore of the Ohio River. Transporting goods to and from urban centers such as Cincinnati, steamboats served two functions. The ships transported raw materials to factories located in the cities and helped settle remote regions such as the wilderness depicted in *Boatmen on the Missouri*.

**Manifest Destiny:** the idea that the United States should occupy the territory between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans