

**The Painters' Panorama:**  
**Narrative, Art, and Faith in the *Moving Panorama of Pilgrim's Progress***  
Forthcoming from the University Press of New England, spring 2015

**Book Abstract**

Since the publication of Stephen Oettermann's *Das Panorama* in 1980 (Frankfurt: Syndicat), scholars have struggled with how to write about this international cultural phenomenon of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries without having the actual artifacts at hand. Fragile, transient, and outsized, most of the thousands of panoramas created during this period were discarded, destroyed, repurposed, or simply left to decay. The latter was true of the *Moving Panorama of Pilgrim's Progress*, which was discovered in the basement of Maine's Saco Museum in 1996 and fully restored in a major initiative culminating in 2012. With the panorama's rediscovery came the recovery of lost works by the major American artists who contributed to it, including Frederic Edwin Church, Jasper Cropsey, Daniel Huntington, and others. This book, therefore, expands the scholarship both of panoramas—by using the *Moving Panorama of Pilgrim's Progress* itself as the core primary document in interpreting it as an object and a work of art—and of nineteenth-century American painting, in exploring the sources for the early religious work of major English and American painters and framing those works as both a rehearsal for and a reaction to their work in the panorama.

The book will include full-color plates of all forty major extant scenes of the panorama as well as essays by Jessica Skwire Routhier, the former director of the Saco Museum and the guiding force behind the 2012 project; Kevin J. Avery, a renowned scholar of nineteenth-century American painting and former curator at The Metropolitan Museum of Art; and Thomas Hardiman, Jr., the former Saco Museum curator who is credited with “rediscovering” the panorama in 1996. Routhier's essay mines the longstanding international tradition of illustrations for *The Pilgrim's Progress*, including British painter and panoramist John Martin, and draws a line of influence through Thomas Cole to his students Church and Cropsey. Avery's essay explores the international origins of moving panoramas as an offshoot of circular panoramas (popular in Britain and continental Europe), and explains why their portability and adaptability made them uniquely suited for American audiences, subjects, geography, and entrepreneurs like John Banvard. Hardiman's essay documents the unique history *Moving Panorama of Pilgrim's Progress* itself, focusing on its creation, travels, and critical reception. These essays, along with the book's strong visual components—including supporting imagery by the artists associated with the panorama and ephemeral material related to the panorama phenomenon—will provide a richly layered look at the panorama and its moment in American art, history, and entertainment.

Influenced by a multitude of European traditions, the *Moving Panorama of Pilgrim's Progress* linked together a uniquely American penchant for technological innovation, entrepreneurship, and showmanship; a burgeoning interest in the arts and culture newly embraced by leaders of American religious life; and a desire to communicate that interest to a diverse populace. This book will demonstrate how *The Moving Panorama of Pilgrim's Progress* illustrates, in a way that few other works of art have done before or since, a moment when ideas about faith, art, and landscape all traveled along the same narrow highway in the course of American life.