



## Early Sketches of T. R. Peale

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Article Summary: Although he is known primarily as a naturalist, Titian Peale also made sketches on the western plains. Most have been lost, but those that remain suggest that Peale can be considered one of the earliest artists of the region.

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## EARLY SKETCHES OF T. R. PEALE\*

BY JOHN FRANCIS McDERMOTT

**T**ITIAN Ramsey Peale II, widely known for his work on the Wilkes expedition in 1838-40 and as a manager of Peale family museums, is commonly thought of as a naturalist. But there are enough bits and fragments concerning his sketches made on the western plains and at the foot of the Rockies to suggest that he is worth investigation as one of the earliest artists of that region.

In 1819 Charles Willson Peale wangled a place for his nineteen-year-old son on Major Stephen H. Long's "Yellowstone Expedition," which the following year, diverted from its original objective, became an exploring trip up the Platte valley to the mountains, across Colorado to the headwaters of the Arkansas, and down that river homeward. According to Long's orders of 31 March 1819 young Titian Peale was "to officiate as assistant naturalist"—that is, he was to assist Dr. Baldwin the botanist, Thomas Say the zoologist, and A. E. Jessup the geologist "in collecting specimens suitable

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\*The Peale journal was published in the *Missouri Historical Review*, January and April, 1947. For the list of the Peale drawings deposited in the Peale Museum I am indebted to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. For permission to reproduce the Buffalo Hunt I thank the Indiana Historical Society which owns one of the very few complete editions of the J. O. Lewis *Aboriginal Port Folio*. The two drawings from the Lawson Scrapbooks I owe to the kindness of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia; and the Grizzly Bear picture as supplied to me by the Library of Congress. Some of my facts are drawn from the *Dictionary of American Biography*.

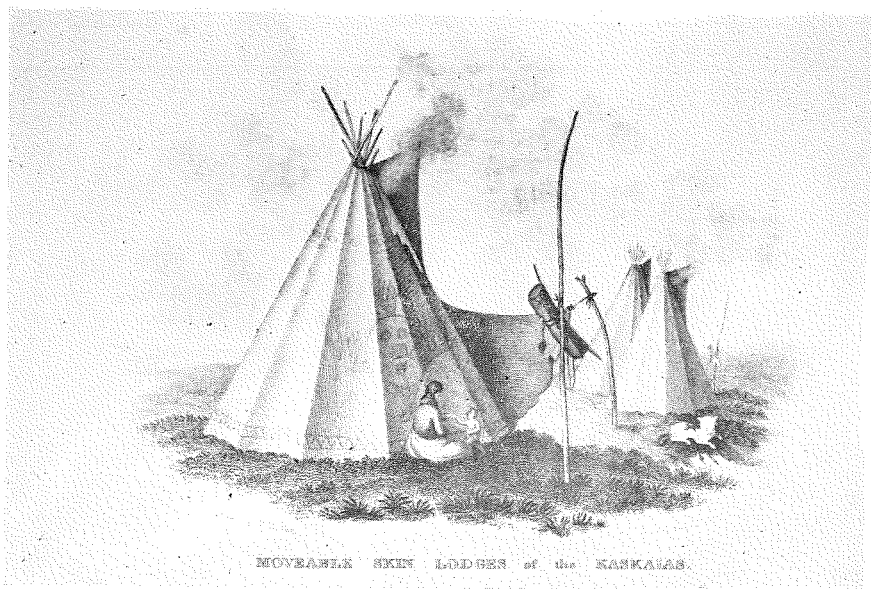


Fig. 1. Moveable Skin Lodges of the Kaskaia. From James, *Narrative of an Expedition*, courtesy of St. Louis Mercantile Library.



Fig. 2. "Buffaloe Hunt on the River Platte." From J. O. Lewis, *Aboriginal Port Folio*, courtesy Indiana Historical Society.



Fig. 3. Cliff Swallows. Drawing by T. R. Peale, from the Lawson Scrapbooks, courtesy Academy of Natural Science, Philadelphia.

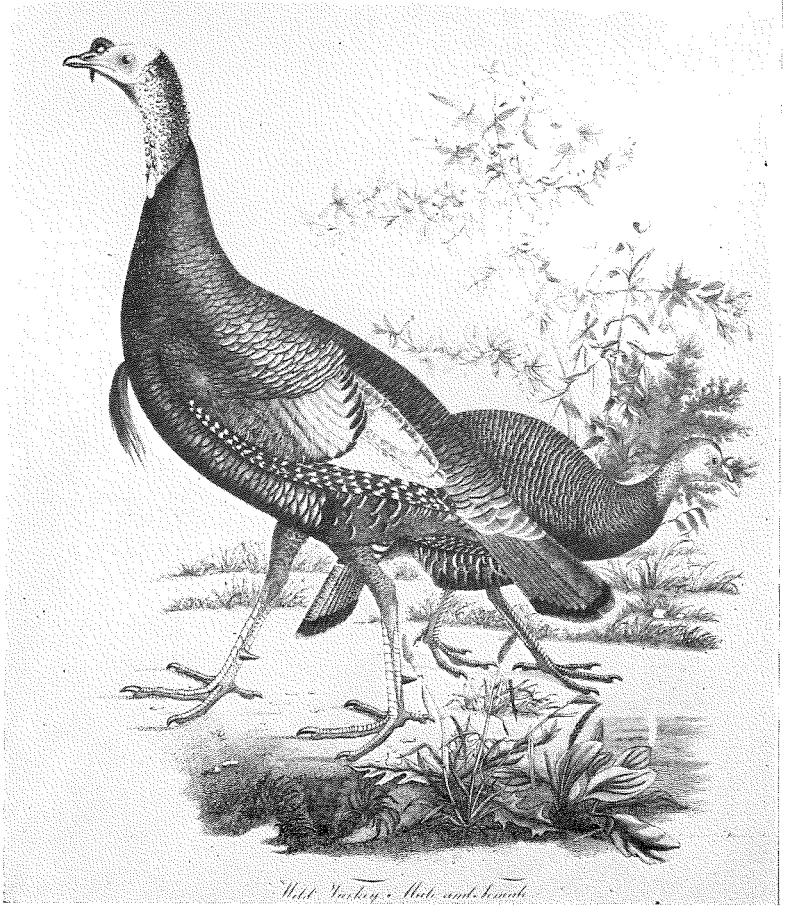


Fig. 4. Wild Turkey, Male and Female. Engraved by Alexander Lawson after a drawing by T. R. Peale. Courtesy Academy of Natural Science, Philadelphia.



Fig. 5. Grizzly Bears. Lithography after a drawing by T. R. Peale, courtesy Library of Congress.

to be preserved, in drafting and delineating them, in preserving skins, &c. of animals, and in sketching the stratification of rocks, earths, &c. as presented on the declivities of precipices." These multiple duties, however, did not prevent him from filling a portfolio with a variety of drawings.

Peale kept a journal from Pittsburgh, 3 May 1819, to Fort Osage in Missouri, 1 August 1819, but, although there are many notes in it about scenery and natural history, there is no reference to any sketching. For instance, on 19 June he reported that he had spent the day "measuring and taking a survey" of the Indian mounds in the northern portion of St. Louis. That he actually made a sketch plan of this area becomes clear only forty years later when he published one in the Smithsonian Institution Report for 1861. Unfortunately this diary comes to an end long before the expedition had set up winter quarters at Council Bluffs so that for the actual exploring trip the next year to the outlying ranges of the Rocky Mountains we have no record by Peale.

Edwin James in his official *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains performed in the years 1819, 1820* occasionally mentioned the young man. Three glimpses we get of Peale in the act of drawing: in July 1820 he sketched some "singular rocks" on what is now called Plum Creek in Colorado. On 1 August he made a drawing of a "black-tailed or mule deer," and on the next day he sketched "an immense circular elevation . . . apparently inaccessible on all sides." But these are only faint indications of the work accomplished by the young artist.

In his preface James mentioned (without further detail) that Peale had made one hundred and twenty-two sketches, of which only twenty-one had been finished for possible use in the printed report. The subjects of these pictures are named in the Peale Museum accession book in which Rubens Peale on 23 March 1821 acknowledged receipt of "Zoological Specimens and Drawings prepared by Titian Peale, Assistant Naturalist for the Exploring Expedition and deposited in the Philadelphia Museum by Maj. S. H. Long . . . pursuant to instructions of the Secretary of War." There the drawings are listed as follows:

1	Buffaloe	finished
1	Black Wolf	do
1	Prairie Wolf	do
1	Badger	do
2	Shrews	unfinished
2	Wild Cats	do
2	Squirrels	unfinished
4	Squirrels	do
1	Skunk	unfinished
1	Gopher	do
1	Wood Rat	do
2	Antelopes	do
2	Black Tail Deer	do
2	Marmots	do
1	Oriole M. & F.	finished
1	Sand Hill Crane M.&F.	do
1	Pine Grose beak (young)	finished
1	Magpies	finished
2	Minute Tern	unfinished
1	White Pelican	do
1	Black Hawk	do
4	Sparrows	do
3	Warblers	do
2	Sand Pipers	do
3	Fly-catchers	do
1	Pigeon	do
1	Woodpecker	do
1	Swallow	do
2	Buntings	do
1	Hawk	do
1	Owl	do
13	Plants	do
9	Fishes	do
9	Lizards	do
3	Snakes	finished [?]
33	Insects	unfinished [?]
6	Shells	finished

None of these sketches, however, were used by James. Their location today is unknown.

But there is evidence of other work accomplished on this trip. That Peale, as one would expect, kept a private sketch-book is suggested by two pictures not included in his official portfolio. One of these, a view (Fig. 1) of "Moveable Skin Lodges of the Kaskaias" (probably sketched on 10 August 1820), was published in *The Portfolio* for December 1822 and was used by James to illustrate his report. The second picture is the most interesting piece of his work I have come upon: it is a "View of a Buffalo Hunt on the River Platte" in the form of a lithograph by P. S. Duval from a painting by Peale (Fig. 2). It turns up oddly enough as No. 80 in the



long unknown tenth part of J. O. Lewis' *Aboriginal Port Folio*, published in Philadelphia in 1836. If Peale did one such picture, we can surely hope that other western scenes from his pencil may yet be found.

For this early period of his life a few more specimens (or references to pictures) can be found. From the Lawson Scrapbooks in the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, I have reproduced a pencil sketch of birds (cliff swallows?) that may belong to this period (Fig. 3); certainly he might have seen these very birds in Colorado on 18 July 1820. In the same record is an engraving by Alexander Lawson of Peale's "Wild Turkey. Male and Female" (Fig. 4). This subject is most commonly known, perhaps, by the W. H. Lizars engraving that appears as Plate IX in Jardine's 1832 edition of Alexander Wilson's *American Ornithology*.

In 1822 Peale exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts four water color pictures of animals but neither the subjects nor the pictures are known today. These were very likely made from sketches acquired on the western expedition. Four other water colors of animals he showed at the Academy in 1826, but that institution is as vague about their fate as about the 1822 pictures. One other western subject turned up a few years later, but it almost certainly dates from the Long expedition. It is a picture of two grizzly bears (Fig. 5) which was put on stone by Thomas Doughty for publication in the first volume of *The Cabinet of Natural History and American Rural Sports* (Philadelphia, 1831). We know that Peale did see grizzlies on 19 July 1820.

Here is variety enough to suggest that Titian Peale may have fattened his western sketchbooks with many a scene and subject beyond those officially required. Perhaps those drawings may yet be found.