NEWS RELEASE:

GLOUCESTER, MA, February 16, 2016 – www.fitzhenrylaneonline.org – The Cape Ann Museum is pleased to announce the public launch of its interactive website, Fitz Henry Lane Online, on February 15, 2016. Fitz Henry Lane (1804-1865) is regarded as one of the masters of nineteenth-century American painting. He captured and transcribed the essential qualities of maritime New England at midcentury. Lane lived most of his life in Gloucester, Massachusetts. The Cape Ann Museum holds the single largest collection of Lane’s works, many of them donated by the families of the original owners.

This innovative online resource is composed of several different components including: a catalog of Lane’s paintings, drawings, and lithographs; an extensive database of historical information, images, and materials related to the subjects within Lane’s pictures; new scholarly essays; and a bibliography and archive of publications. This rich historical material is connected to the relevant paintings through easily clickable links. The 319 works currently on the site include all known Lane pictures in public collections. Private-collection works will be added in stages in the future. The Museum hopes that this website will function as a central repository for information about Lane and a key resource for anyone (student, scholar, or museum visitor) interested in nineteenth-century American art or history. It exemplifies the way in which the study of a specific time, place, and artist can be truly interdisciplinary and interactive, and can open new avenues of study.

John Wilmerding, eminent historian of American art and Lane scholar, who served as Senior Advisor to the project, has noted:

This catalogue raisonné is the most exciting development in Lane research since our studies of him began in the 1950s. Not only will it provide broad new opportunities to investigate his art, it collateral is going to illuminate the copies and collaborations by his assistant and follower Mary B. Mellen. This sets a new level for such catalogues now ongoing in America, and raises the bar by expanding into the cultural context of works. It promises to be an inspiration for the research specialist and a learning delight for the general user.
Fitz Henry Lane

Fitz Henry Lane created his pictures within the particular social, historical, and cultural contexts of pre-Civil War America, a period that witnessed the rise of New England’s industrialism, international trade, and mercantilism while also looking nostalgically to a simpler time that was rapidly disappearing. He painted the harbors and coastlines of Massachusetts, Maine, and New York, and the vessels that were such an important part of the local and national economy during the mid-nineteenth century. Lane is known primarily for his views of preternaturally calm harbors and poetic landscapes often called “luminist” for their qualities of extraordinary light and stillness. However, he also painted portraits of ships for their owners and captains, bustling coastal ports, and vessels negotiating the rough waters of the open ocean. According to Project Director Sam Holdsworth:

A primary goal of the site is to highlight the marriage of Lane’s extraordinary attention to the details of the scenes he depicted with the formal aesthetics and sheer beauty of his artistic accomplishment. Almost every work tells a multi-layered story about the evolution of the maritime world of coastal New England as well as tracks his progression as an artist from the specific to the ephemeral as his work matured.

Fitz Henry Lane Online

On the website, the viewer can investigate each of Lane’s paintings, drawings, and prints in magnified detail and also explore background information and the historical context from the interconnected databases. The Fitz Henry Lane Online user designs his or her own path of investigation and can follow multiple lines of inquiry leading to various levels of information and images in the digital archive. For example, when looking at an entry for a Lane painting of Gloucester Harbor, the user can learn about the vessels in the painting through links to historic photographs, maps, newspaper articles, boat-builders’ drawings, and information on the type of cargo, such as lumber or cod. Viewing Lane’s detailed depiction of Gloucester’s skyline, the user can identify the nineteenth-century churches, or a hotel built in 1849, with links to its architectural plans, stereo views, and articles on how tourism thrived after the extension of the railroad from Boston in 1848. A broad range of scholars with expertise in various fields, such as maritime history, lighthouse history, and local town history, have donated their time and research to the project. Selected catalog entries include an interactive feature in which the user can click
on the painting itself to reach the historical materials, while in others a list of keywords provides a guide to viewers and allows the database of artworks to be filtered and searched.

Catalog entries for the works include high-resolution photographs and links to the related historical information, as well as exhibition, publication, and provenance information. Many have detailed conservation images, the result of work contributed by the Cleveland Museum of Art. The entry for each painting also includes a short essay written for the website.

Additional features of the site include thematic essays that provide an introduction to Lane as well as a context for some of the historical topics documented by the archival materials. Lesson plans for teachers present a guide to exploring and navigating the vast amount of information contained in the resource. A chronology provides a framework and introduction to Lane’s life. The bibliography and archive of published materials gather together many important sources for the researcher. Each of the parallel databases, including those of the artworks, exhibitions, owners, published references, and historical materials are not only searchable but are interconnected at multiple points.

The Role of Online Resources

Many digital projects of museums and libraries focus on cataloging and providing access to the disparate collection of a single institution. Other sites merely catalog the works of a single artist without providing historical context. This website synthesizes primary-source materials and collections from many different institutions and many traditionally divided disciplines by bringing together information on a specific artist and his historic period. The innovative and unprecedented model established by this website is the way in which the project has created five relational databases rather than a single one. Each of the five different parallel databases (artworks, owners, literature, exhibitions, and historical materials) has its own structural integrity yet is linked to the other databases through multiple points of connection.

The Museum intends for this site to serve as the definitive site for Lane scholarship. It will provide a broad historical context for Lane’s pictures while also building a resource on the history of mid-nineteenth-century maritime New England in which many varied documents, institutions, and scholarly fields have been linked. It is hoped that the availability of this
information on the web will stimulate further scholarship and ongoing submissions from experts in the relevant fields.

**History and Future of the Project**

The project was begun in 2010 under the direction of Project Director and Editor Sam Holdsworth, with scholarly advice from Lane scholar John Wilmerding. Melissa Geisler Trafton serves as Senior Researcher and Managing Editor with broad participation from Cape Ann Museum staff and associated scholars. Software design firm panOpticon provided critical expertise in creating an innovative cataloging tool, and a site design that could accommodate the relational databases and interconnected categories of information.

The project will continue to expand to include Lane paintings from private collections and additional scholarly essays and historical materials. Owners of Lane pictures, and individuals with information about Lane works, are encouraged to contact the project using the online form or completing the object information and submission agreement forms.

[www.fitzhenrylaneonline.org/submission/](http://www.fitzhenrylaneonline.org/submission/)

In conjunction with the website, the Museum is organizing a special exhibition of Lane’s lithographs featuring works from its permanent collection and those borrowed from other institutions. This will be the first time many of Lane’s lithographs will be shown together. “Drawn on Stone: the Lithographs of Fitz Henry Lane” will open on October 7, 2017 and run through March 4, 2018. An illustrated catalog will accompany the exhibition and a symposium is scheduled for October 27–28, 2017.
About the Cape Ann Museum

The Cape Ann Museum is located just north of Boston in the heart of downtown Gloucester, Massachusetts, America's oldest fishing port. Founded in 1873, the holdings of the Cape Ann Museum include its collection of paintings, drawings, and lithographs by Fitz Henry Lane. This is the largest collection of works by Lane in the world and gives the Museum a stature few other institutions its size can claim. It also makes the Cape Ann Museum and its extensive library and this website a vitally important repository for information on Lane and a center for ongoing research into his life, his artistic accomplishments, and his influence on generations of artists who followed in his footsteps.

The Museum’s collection also includes work by other prominent painters and sculptors who lived on, visited, or were inspired by Cape Ann, including contemporary Cape Ann artists. The permanent collection includes fine and decorative arts, and artifacts from the major industries of the area, fishing and granite quarrying.

In addition to its exhibition galleries, the Museum's facilities include an auditorium, the library and archives, a children's activity center, two sculpture gardens, and two historic homes. A rotating schedule of special exhibitions, related lectures, programs, guided tours and events is offered throughout the year. For more information visit: www.capeannmuseum.org

Contacts:
Sam Holdsworth, Project Director & Editor
sam.holdsworth@gmail.com
(609) 751-9179

Melissa Geisler Trafton, Senior Researcher & Managing Editor
mgtrafton@gmail.com
(208) 624-9124

Press Images:
Alison Anholt, Rights & Reproductions Manager
(978) 283-0455
fhlonline@capeannmuseum.org
Supporters

This project has been produced by the Cape Ann Museum with funds raised in its recent capital campaign. Major support was provided by the Wyeth Foundation for American Art, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, with additional funds from the Danversbank Charitable Foundation, and the John H. and H. Naomi Tomfohrde Foundation. The Cleveland Museum of Art contributed conservation studies and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston provided curatorial and conservation assistance.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation’s 123,000 libraries and 35,000 museums. Our mission is to inspire libraries and museums to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement. Our grant making, policy development, and research help libraries and museums deliver valuable services that make it possible for communities and individuals to thrive. To learn more, visit [www.imls.gov](http://www.imls.gov).

Website design and database software by [panOpticon](http://www.panopticon.com) dedicated to the art of cataloging art.