

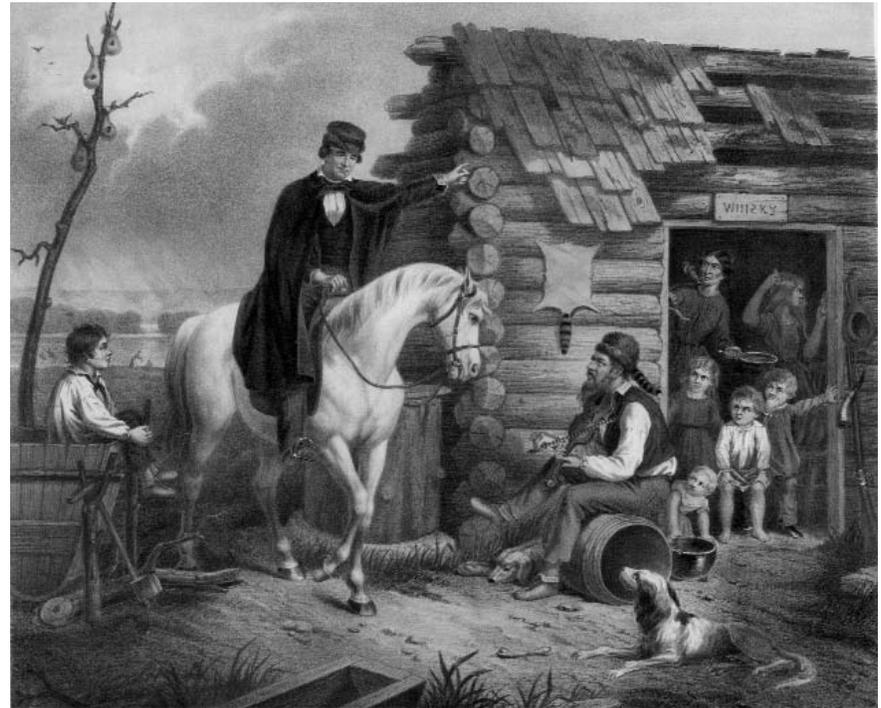


The Picture of the Arkansas Traveler

CHAPTERS OF ARKANSAS HISTORY • A PUBLICATION OF HISTORIC ARKANSAS MUSEUM

Every picture, every photograph, every painting tells a story. They tell about times, places and people, even if the people are made-up characters. An image may tell most of all about the person who made it.

The “Arkansas Traveler” picture by Edward Payson Washbourne tells at least three stories. It tells the famous story that Sandford Faulkner wrote about the lost stranger and his strange conversation with the “squatter,” a backwoods fellow sitting in a cabin door. It tells a lot about life in early Arkansas. And it even tells us something about Washbourne himself.



Can you imagine what it was like to live somewhere on the frontier of Arkansas during the time shown in the picture? Even though it goes a bit overboard to show that the squatter’s cabin is shabby, it still tells us a lot about life in that time and place.

Let’s take a little tour of the picture, inside on the next two pages. By looking closely at items the artist included, we can learn something about everyday life for the squatter and his family.



Looking at the Arkansas Traveler

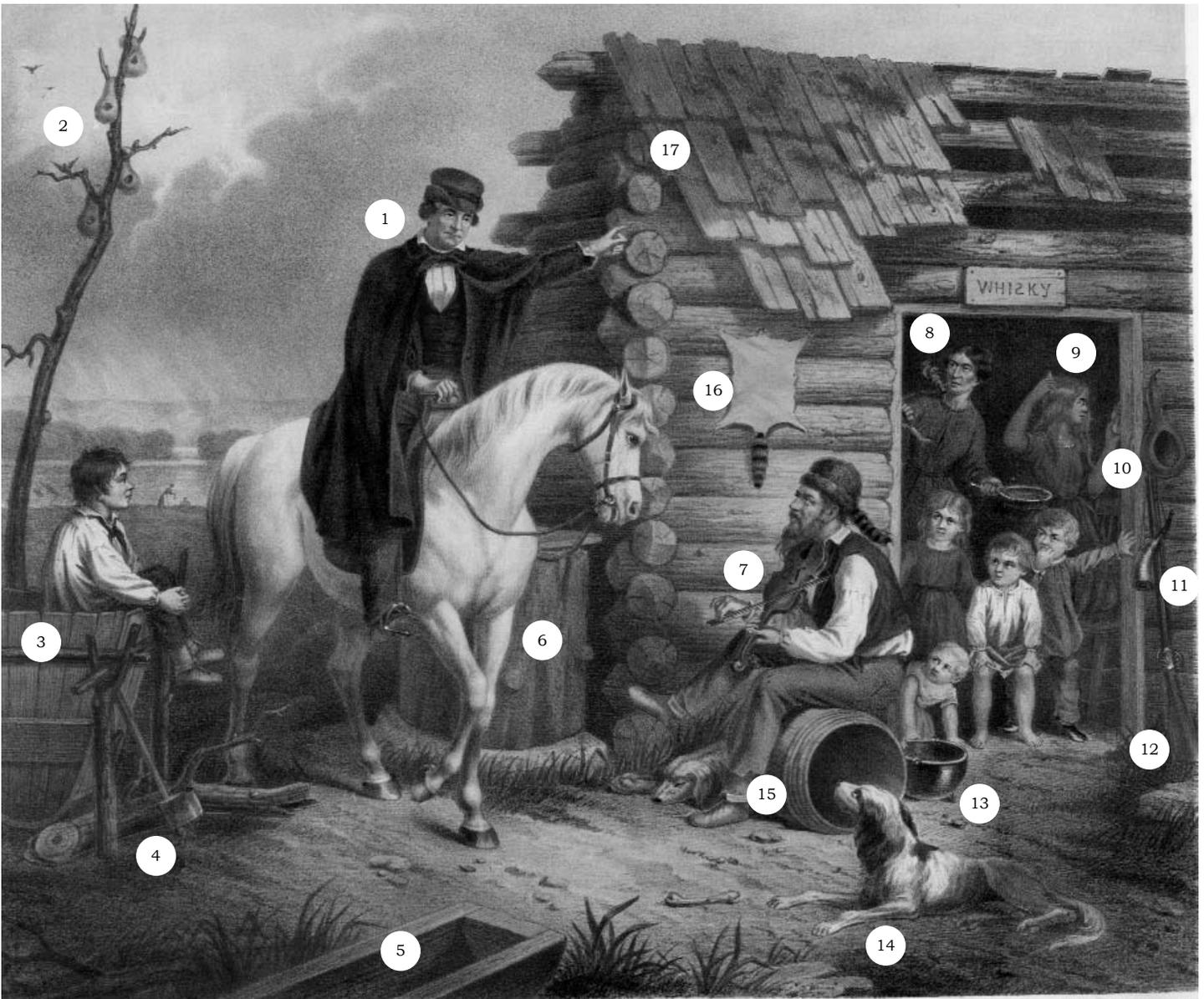
1. **Traveler and Horse:** Here's the Traveler and his fine horse. He's very well dressed, with a hat and a cape and boots that look store-bought, from a city. The horse looks well taken care of, too. Do they seem out of place to you? What is the Traveler pointing to?
2. **Gourd Bird Nests:** These gourds are hollowed out for bird nests. Maybe martins live in them. Martins are birds that eat thousands of mosquitoes. Since the Squatter's family lives near a river, mosquitoes could be a problem.
3. **Hopper:** What is that boy sitting in? It's an ash hopper. The family sweeps the ashes from the fireplace and stores them in the hopper. Next, the ashes become part of the recipe for making soap.
4. **Axe:** Here's an axe—one with a very heavy "bit," or iron head—the part that does the cutting. With this axe, they can cut their firewood for heating and cooking. It probably helped when they were building the house, too.
5. **Trough:** This is a wooden watering trough. Horses, dogs and chickens come to it for a drink of water. Hmm... it looks like the Squatter needs to fill the trough—or maybe that's a chore for one of the children.
6. **Log Barrel:** This looks like a hollowed-out log with a lid on it. You're right. That's exactly what it is. It's a way for the family to store something, maybe some grain.
7. **Fiddle:** The Squatter is holding a fiddle. It looks like a pretty nice one. In a few minutes, he'll hand the fiddle and bow to the Traveler and then the real fun will begin.
8. **Family:** The Squatter's wife—her name is "Sal"—and five of the children are in the doorway. Sal is smoking a corncob pipe and holding an iron skillet. The pipe isn't all that unusual for a frontier woman, and the skillet is just about right for making cornbread. See the boy in a nightshirt? Boys wore them a lot in the daytime. The Squatter and his family are wearing homemade shoes that look like moccasins—or no shoes at all.
9. **Comb:** The oldest daughter is combing her hair. We know the comb can't be plastic, but can we guess what it is made of? It might be wood, shell, bone or even a cow's horn.
10. **Gourd Dipper:** Here is a gourd used as a dipper. If we all wanted a drink of water, we'd take turns dipping it up in the gourd and passing it along when each of us is finished.
11. **Powder Horn:** The rifle only fires one shot at a time. A little gunpowder has to be poured in behind each shot. The powder horn keeps the gunpowder handy and dry. It has a little opening that lets just the right amount of powder pour out.
12. **Rifle:** What's the rifle for? Wild animals are meat for the table, and you can bet the squatter often goes hunting. Besides that, a hungry bear could show up tonight at the cabin. The Squatter would need to grab his rifle in a hurry.
13. **Pot:** Sal will use this pot to make a stew for supper. She'll probably hang it over the fire in the fireplace, or maybe just set it right on the hot coals.

14. **Dogs:** There's a dog lying on the ground, and another at the Squatter's feet. The children likely play with them, but the dogs also help out with hunting. They can track animals by smell and let the Squatter know where to look for tonight's supper.

15. **Barrel:** The Squatter is sitting on a barrel. Right now, the barrel is in use as a seat. If it were turned upright, it could catch rain water from the roof. But not much water would fall off the roof—it would mostly just fall through. (So why doesn't he fix the roof?)

16. **Skin:** Here is a raccoon skin, all stretched out and nailed to the wall. It will hang there until it dries. After that, Sal can make it into another cap, maybe for the boy on the ash hopper.

17. **Roof:** The Traveler is pointing to the roof. He's probably just asked the squatter why he doesn't fix the roof. (That's part of the famous conversation between them.)





The Man Behind the Picture

What does the picture of the Arkansas Traveler tell us about Edward Payson Washbourne, the artist?

Washbourne made the tale of the Traveler into a scene we can still look at and wonder about. He certainly understood frontier Arkansas and its characters.

He had respect for Colonel Faulkner as the author of the Traveler story. We know that because he dedicated the painting to the Colonel.



None of this is a surprise if we know a little about the young man. If you go looking for information about him, here's something that may help. His last name is sometimes spelled "Washburn" and sometimes spelled "Washbourne."

Edward's father was Cephas Washburn, a minister and a missionary to the Cherokee. The Cherokee were being moved from their homes in Georgia, North Carolina and other parts of the Smokey Mountain areas, around the time Arkansas first became a territory. The Cherokee were being sent to Arkansas, and Cephas Washburn wanted to help them. He built a school for the Cherokee near where Russellville is now, and later moved it into what is now Oklahoma.

Edward and his brothers and sisters grew up in Arkansas when nobody knew where the Cherokee and other Native Americans would finally live, and when everybody was trying to find a way to live in the new, wild country. Edward's oldest

brother married a daughter of John Ridge, one of the principal Cherokee chiefs.

Edward wanted to be an artist, even when he was very little. For a long time he was what people call self-taught. Finally he managed to go to New York to study art. He wanted to make a living with his art and he found people who paid him to paint their portraits. This was before cameras, so a portrait was the only way anyone could have an image of him or herself.

After Washburn painted his Arkansas Traveler picture, he worked with a printer in Boston to make many lithograph copies to sell across the country.

We will never know whether Edward might have become an even more famous painter, because he died when he was only twenty-nine years old. He died from pneumonia, and he is buried in Mount Holly Cemetery in Little Rock where Cephas Washburn, Colonel Faulkner and many other important people from Arkansas's early history are buried.

Contributing writer: Charley Sandage

Editor: Starr Mitchell

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The museum opens its doors daily for tours of one of the state's oldest neighborhoods.

For information on other educational materials or for tour information, including special rates for student groups, call (501) 324-9351, or visit our website at www.historicarkansas.org



200 East Third St.
Little Rock, AR 72201
(501)324-9351
TDD (501) 324-9811



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A HOME PICTURE BY A HOME ARTIST.

Our young friend, Mr. E. P. Washbourne, to whose talent as a delineator we have had frequent occasion to allude, has presented us with the justly celebrated picture of "The Arkansas Traveler," painted by himself and lithographed by L. Grozelier, of Boston.

The subject, the home legend of "The Arkansas Traveler," has ample justice done it by the artist, Mr. Washbourne, who is a native of the State.

Those who would purchase a good picture, at which they can have a good laugh, and which will do for their children to keep, and laugh at, will do well to call at Reardon's Book-Store, and make such a purchase.

From: The Arkansas Gazette, December 3, 1859.