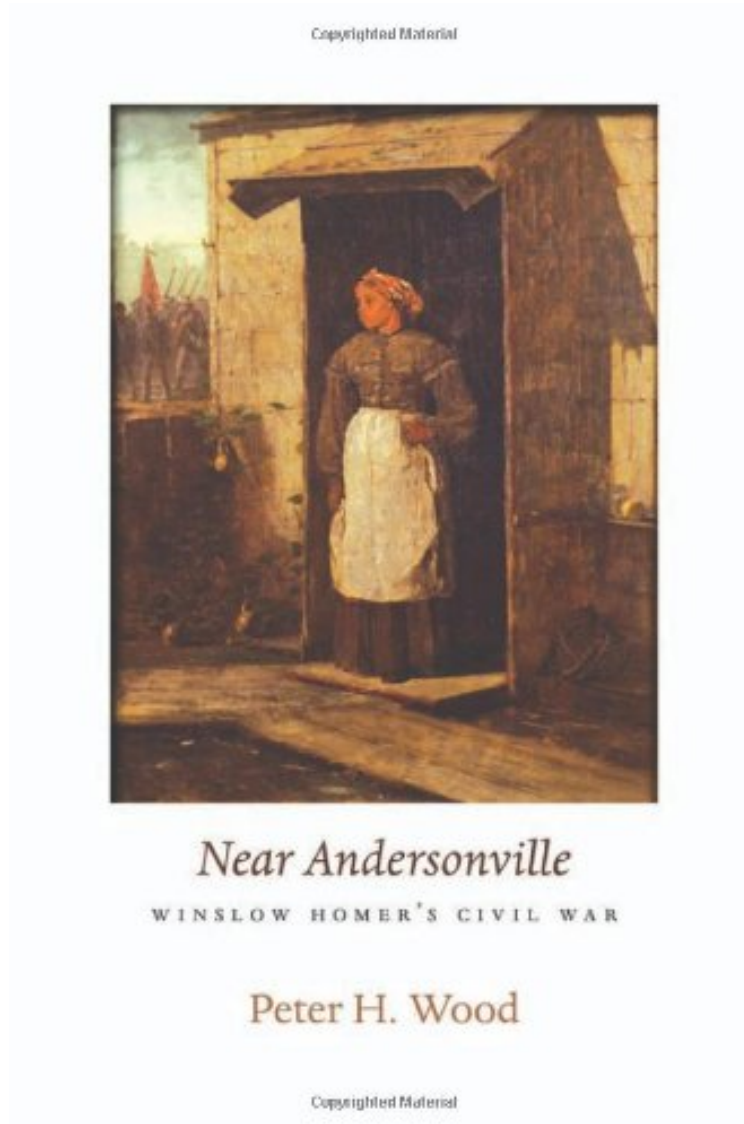


## Near Andersonville: Winslow Homer's Civil War (The Nathan I. Huggins Lectures)

*Peter H. Wood*

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**Peter H. Wood : Near Andersonville: Winslow Homer's Civil War (The Nathan I. Huggins Lectures)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Near Andersonville: Winslow Homer's Civil War (The Nathan I. Huggins Lectures):

13 of 13 people found the following review helpful. An engaging read that makes one think By G I Teach Near Andersonville is a quick read at less than 90 pages; it is well written so is an engaging read. This is an analysis of a

painting by Winslow Homer. The first part discusses how the painting ended up in with a New Jersey family and this intriguing "detective" story raises issues about what is Art, how important is it to establish who the artist is, etc. In addition, since the painting was re-discovered in the 1960's, he reviews the social situation of the time and why 1960's Art Historians would not be inclined to analyze a painting that so directly addresses race relations. Wood also discusses how the painting, shortly after it was finished, ended up in the hands of a independent, single woman who traveled south during the Civil War to join a group providing education to freed slaves. This extensive section also discusses the abolitionist debates in Boston that were occurring when Homer was growing up. It also discussing Andersonville, a notorious Civil War POW camp and this made me think of some the POW camps in the news this last decade. The final chapter actually analyzes the painting, including some key insights into the symbolism and its relevance to an 1866 audience. This has some key information about why slaves had ambiguous attitudes toward the Civil War and also the conflict in the North about exactly what the war was about. The final short section deals with how modern viewers might deal with the painting and this last section is a powerful endorsement of empathizing with those on the fringes of society, which, in this picture, included blacks and women. I learned a lot of history from this book, a lot about how social context influences art, about how to really examine a picture, and it left me with a lot to think about in terms of race, gender, and power in society.<sup>2</sup> of 2 people found the following review helpful. Short and sweet  
By J Grimes  
A very quick read, this book was well researched and well written. Wood keeps his singular focus and helps the reader understand this work of art, the artist, and the time in which it was created. The only drawback is that Wood makes several conclusions based on inconclusive evidence. It doesn't take too much away from the book because Wood's argument is still convincing.<sup>4</sup> of 4 people found the following review helpful. engaging book  
By Penny  
A very thoughtful and thought provoking book by a top notch scholar. Very readable for the non expert. Plus Homer's paintings are fabulous.

The admired American painter Winslow Homer rose to national attention during the Civil War. But one of his most important early images remained unknown for a century. The renowned artist is best known for depicting ships and sailors, hunters and fishermen, rural vignettes and coastal scenes. Yet he also created some of the first serious black figures in American art. Near Andersonville (1865–66) is the earliest and least known of these impressive images. Peter Wood, a leading expert on Homer's images of blacks, reveals the long-hidden story of this remarkable Civil War painting. His brisk narrative locates the picture in southwest Georgia in August 1864 and provides its military and political context. Wood underscores the agony of the Andersonville prison camp and highlights a huge but little-known cavalry foray ordered by General Sherman as he laid siege to Atlanta. Homer's image takes viewers "behind enemy lines" to consider the utter failure of "Stoneman's Raid" from the perspective of an enslaved black Southerner. By examining the interplay of symbolic elements, Wood reveals a picture pregnant with meaning. He links it to Abraham Lincoln's presidential campaign of 1864 and underscores the enduring importance of Homer's thoughtful black woman. The painter adopted a bottom-up perspective on slavery and emancipation that most scholars needed another century to discover. By integrating art and history, Wood's provocative study gives us a fresh vantage point on Homer's early career, the struggle to end slavery, and the dramatic closing years of the Civil War.

What a wonderful book Peter Wood has written. He has taken one of Winslow Homer's most rarely studied paintings and, literally and metaphorically, given it back its story. In the process Near Andersonville becomes both a window opening onto the past and a mirror reflecting our own time. (Marc Simpson, Associate Director, Graduate Program in the History of Art, Williams College) An enormously creative and insightful new perspective on one of the most important and tragic episodes in American history. Wood's sensitive and intelligent reading of Homer's works shows that there are indeed many ways to illuminate the past. (Annette Gordon-Reed, author of *The Hemingses of Monticello*) Wood has unraveled the deep and subtle meanings expressed in Near Andersonville. The ambiguities of slavery and freedom, of the past and future framed by war, are brilliantly analyzed in this powerful and compelling book. (James M. McPherson, author of *Battle Cry of Freedom*) A magnificently focused meditation that arrives at a completely fresh perspective on the painting and its precise Civil War background. Readers will see Homer's Near Andersonville anew after engaging with Peter Wood's literally eye-opening work. (Werner Sollors, Harvard University) Wood's detective work and his interpretive conclusions persuade us that Homer understood and was affected by the moral ramifications of the Civil War and that he felt deep empathy toward the African Americans caught up in the conflict. (Patricia Hills, Boston University) Peter Wood is one of the most curious, original, and rewarding historians of our time and in Near Andersonville all his talents are on full display. Part detective story, part history, and part art criticism, this book is a masterpiece. (John Stauffer, author of *Black Hearts of Men*) In his engrossing book by the same name, Wood argues that [Homer's] Near Andersonville "explores the question" of "What happens...if any part of the Civil War drama is viewed explicitly from the vantage point of the enslaved." Wood offers an illuminating, if at times speculative, reading of the image...His careful reconstruction of the painting's provenance, and his account of the discovery of the painting's title, are every bit as rewarding as his careful analysis of the visual symbolism of the painting itself. (Lauren Winner Books Culture 2010-12-09) In Near Andersonville, Wood tells the

captivating story of an abandoned painting with the meticulousness of a historian and the panache of a novelist. More than just an enigmatic painting, *Near Andersonville* is a testament to the passions of white abolitionists, and the halting confusion of the freed slaves they cared for. This short book is a quick, learned, and touching read. (Leah Triplett *Art New England* 2011-03-01)[A] jewel of a book...This study began as a series of Nathan Huggins Lectures at Harvard, and it reads just like a really good lecture: engaging, informative, easy to listen to, and fully thought provoking. Wood, no stranger to Homer, having coauthored a study of the painter's images of African Americans in 1988, accomplishes the deceptively difficult task of making a subject about which he knows a great deal entirely accessible to anyone who wants to pick up this book. (Steven Conn *New England Quarterly* 2011-09-01)About the AuthorPeter H. Wood is Professor Emeritus of History at Duke University.