

Notes

1. Pigment analysis reports are available in the Scientific Research department (4 April 1984, 3 May 1984, and 16 August 1984).

2. Cited in Smith 1829–1842, 9: 729; HdG 1907–1927, 4: 433. Lugt 1938, however, lists no “Hammersley” or “Hammersley” sales and only one 1841 sale conducted by Rainy, on 21 August 1841, the property of Skammers.

3. Jervis 1854, 344. Not listed in Waagen 1838b or Waagen 1854–1857.

4. The location of one of these is not known (HdG 1907–1927, 4: 410, no. 114; Broulhiet 1938, 209; formerly Robarts Collection, England). The other two are in London (National Gallery, inv. no. 995; Smith 1829–1842, 6: 133, no. 63; HdG 1907–1927, 4: 427, no. 162; Broulhiet 1938, 269) and The Hague (Mauritshuis, inv. no. 1061; HdG 1907–1927, 6: 434, no. 184).

5. For a discussion of the Mauritshuis painting and its relationship to *Hut among Trees*, see Broos 1987, 208–211.

References

- 1829–1842 Smith, 9 (1842): 729, no. 28.
 1854 Jervis, 2: 225, 344.
 1859 Thoré (Bürger): 28–44 (either *Hut among Trees* or Ashburton's other Hobbema is mentioned).
 1891 Cundall: 157.
 1907–1927 HdG, 4 (1912): 415–416, no. 181.
 1913–1916 Widener: intro., 20, repro.
 1923 Widener: unpaginated, repro.
 1931 Widener: 56–57, repro.
 1938 Broulhiet: 236, 413, no. 268.
 1948 Widener: 60, repro.
 1960 MacLaren: 170.
 1965 NGA: 68, no. 626.
 1968 NGA: 60, repro.
 1975 NGA: 176–177, repro.
 1985 NGA: 203, repro.
 1986 Paris: 256–257, repro.
 1987 Broos: 211, repro.
 1992 Brown/MacLaren, 1: 182, fig. 43.

1937.1.62 (62)

A View on a High Road

1665
 Oil on canvas, 93.1 x 127.8 (36⁵/₈ x 50⁵/₁₆)
 Andrew W. Mellon Collection

Inscriptions

At lower left: *m. hobbema./1665*

Technical Notes: The support, a fine-weight, plain-weave fabric, has been lined with the top tacking margin trimmed. In prior interventions, painted canvas along the top edge was twice folded over the stretcher to serve as a tacking margin. This edge was then later restored to the picture plane along with the unfolded bottom, left, and right original tacking margins. The present dimensions are thus slightly expanded

at the bottom and sides. A thin, reddish brown ground layer is covered by a pale brown imprimatura, which has been incorporated as a mid-tone in the sky and foreground.

The design was sketched in thin dark paint, then painted in thinly applied pastes. The sky was painted first with reserves left for the houses and trees. The foreground figures were painted over the completed landscape. The gabled house at far right was made smaller, and the tree to the right of the pathway was shifted slightly.

Thin bands of loss occur along fold lines and around tacking holes. The paint, with the exception of some thinness in the sky, is in excellent condition. The painting is currently in restoration, and the accompanying color plate was taken with the painting in stripped condition.

Provenance: Mme Jean Etienne Fizeau [néé Marie Anne Massé, d. 1790], Amsterdam; (sale, Amsterdam, 27 April 1791);¹ Henry Welbore Ellis Agar, 2nd Viscount Clifden [1761–1836], until 1806; Robert Grosvenor, 1st Marquess of Westminster [1767–1845];² by inheritance to his grandson, Hugh Lupus Grosvenor, 1st Duke of Westminster [1825–1899], Grosvenor House, London; Alfred Charles de Rothschild [1842–1918], Tring Park, Hertfordshire, probably between 1884 and 1888;³ bequeathed to Almina Wombwell Dennistoun, Countess of Carnarvon, Highclere, near Newbury, Berkshire; (Duveen Brothers, New York); sold November 1924 to Andrew W. Mellon, Pittsburgh and Washington; died 28 December 1934 to The A. W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust, Pittsburgh.

Exhibited: British Institution, London, 1834, either no. 136 or 139 and 1845, no. 49 or 52. *Works of Old Masters*, Burlington Fine Arts Club, London, 1871, either no. 35 or 41.⁴ *A Loan Exhibition of Dutch Paintings*, Detroit Institute of Arts, 1925, no. 11. *Paintings by Old Masters from Pittsburgh Collections*, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, 1925, no. 28.

HOBBEA'S STYLE developed very rapidly throughout the 1660s. By the middle of the decade he had opened his compositions to give a light-filled and spacious feeling to his scenes. This painting, signed and dated 1665, is an excellent example of this period of his work.⁵ The road that passes through the rural village meanders diagonally into the distance, passing half-timbered homes that sit comfortably within the wooded landscape. The trees, which in earlier works form dense barriers in the middle distance (see *A Wooded Landscape*, 1937.1.61), rise only to the left of center. Otherwise, Hobbema has kept them low and relegated them to the peripheries of his scene. To judge from the patterns of light and shade, it seems to be midday. Villagers sit and relax beside the road or talk over the front stoop. Two children play with boats at a small pond beside the road, along which a mounted falconer and his attendant pass into the distance. In the center foreground an elegant couple, the man holding a stick, passes near a traveler with his knapsack resting on a cut log.



Fig. 1. Meindert Hobbema, *Village among Trees*, 1665, oil on panel, New York, Frick Collection

Hobbema lived and worked in Amsterdam, yet with only a few exceptions, his paintings represent rural scenes, most of which have never been precisely identified. As in many of his paintings, the half-timbered buildings with their tie-beam construction seen in this small village are characteristic of the vernacular architecture in the eastern provinces of the Netherlands, in the border area between the river Twente in the province of Overijssel and the western part of the German state of Nordrhein-Westfalen.⁶ Two paintings by Hobbema containing buildings of this type have been identified as representing watermills that belonged to the manor house of Singraven near Denekamp, a Dutch village in Overijssel.⁷ It seems probable that he derived many of his scenes from visits to this area (see also *A Farm in the Sunlight*, 1937.1.60). Hobbema's interest in this region was probably spurred by the experience of

his teacher Jacob van Ruisdael, who had visited Overijssel, and specifically Singraven, on his trip to Bentheim in the early 1650s.⁸ The date of Hobbema's trip or trips is not known, although buildings of this type first appear in his work around 1662 (as in *The Travelers*, 1942.9.31).

Part of the difficulty in identifying the exact location of such a view is that Hobbema freely varied architectural motifs and the placements of buildings within his works. Although this painting convinces the viewer of its fidelity to nature through the careful observation of light, gentle flow of the landscape, and attention to architectural detail, a smaller variant in the Frick Collection, New York, from the same year, 1665, *A Village among Trees* (34½ x 47¼ in.), differs in many respects (fig. 1). While the general disposition of elements in the two paintings is extremely close, the relative scale, placement, and structural elements of the buildings are not identical. Both of these paintings, moreover, essentially elaborate upon a composition now in the Louvre, Paris, that Hobbema painted in 1662.⁹

Another similar composition, *A Wooded Landscape with Cottages* (fig. 2),¹⁰ in the Mauritshuis, The Hague, has been traditionally considered a companion piece to *A View on a High Road*. The paintings hung as such in the Fizeau, Agar, and Grosvenor collections until the Washington painting was sold to Alfred Charles de Rothschild at the end of the nineteenth century. It is highly unlikely, however, that they were actually designed as pendants, for the compositions are parallel rather than complementary; the dimensions are also slightly different.

An unusual feature of the Washington painting is the presence of the elegantly dressed couple strolling on the road through the village. Hobbema did not usually include such figures in his paintings. Whether they represent country gentry or city visitors, vast differences exist between their social status and that of the peasants seated by the edge of the road. Curiously, given the importance of these figures within the composition, they are poorly painted. They float above the surface of the road and lack physical substance. They were painted by an unidentified artist different from the one who painted the peasants. Although the names Adriaen van de Velde (1636–1672) and Johannes Lingelbach (1622–1674) have been suggested, the style of the figures does not resemble that of either artist.¹¹ Indeed, it has been suggested that these figures were added by a later hand, perhaps in the eighteenth century, at a period when it is known that artists “finished” a number of seventeenth-century land-

Fig. 2. Meindert Hobbema, *A Wooded Landscape with Cottages*, c. 1665, oil on canvas, The Hague, Mauritshuis





Meindert Hobbema, *A View on a High Road*, 1937.1.62

scape drawings by adding figures to their foregrounds.¹² The figures, in any event, had been added by 1786 when the painting was engraved, in reverse, by James Mason.¹³

Notes

1. The Fizeau (variously spelled Fiseau, Fezeau, or Fiziau) sale was known to Lugt not from an actual example of the catalogue, but because it is listed in Willigen 1873.

2. The Ellis Agar Collection was to be sold at Christie's, London, 2–3 May 1806, and a sale catalogue was produced, but before the auction could take place, the complete collection was instead sold to Lord Grosvenor, for 30,000 guineas (Redford 1888, 1: 95).

3. It is not clear exactly when the picture was separated from its so-called pendant, now in the Mauritshuis (see text), and sold to Rothschild. It cannot have been before 1884, because the catalogue of the Rothschild collection produced in that year includes only one Hobbema, a much smaller painting that clearly does not correspond with *A View on a High Road* in either description or dimensions. (Davis 1884, no. 208.) On the other hand, the 1888 and 1913 versions of *Grosvenor House* both list only one of the two paintings (no. 39 and no. 62 respectively), and since the Mauritshuis picture remained in the family much longer than *A View on a High Road*—it was eventually sold by Lady Mary Grosvenor in 1966 (Sotheby's, London, 6 July 1966, no. 75)—it seems reasonable to assume that this was the picture described in these two catalogues and that *A View on a High Road* had already been sold by 1888. This hypothesis would seem to be confirmed by the fact that a 1901 account of the collection describes and reproduces only the Mauritshuis painting and makes no mention of its partner (Erskine 1901, 209–216). Two pieces of information appear to conflict with this assumption. Firstly, HdG 1907–1927, 4: 413, states that at the time he was writing, *A View on a High Road* was still in the Grosvenor Collection while the pendant was not. Secondly, the 1913 catalogue of the Westminster Collection states that the Hobbema listed was “engraved by Mason,” but the only known print by Mason after Hobbema is after *A View on a High Road*. It seems likely, however, that both of these pieces of information are incorrect, and that *A View on a High Road* did pass to Rothschild between 1884 and 1888.

4. Cundall 1891, 158, mentions the 1845 and 1871 exhibitions under his listing for *A View on a High Road* and its pendant, but without saying which of the two pictures is supposed to have been exhibited in each case. HdG 1907–1927 does not mention these exhibitions under either picture. Graves 1913, 515, 517, says that two landscapes from the Westminster Collection were in each of these exhibitions but does not provide sufficient details to be able to identify them. (He also says that one Westminster Hobbema was in the 1871 Royal Academy exhibition, but from the dimensions this must have been the Mauritshuis picture.) The British Institution exhibition catalogues themselves are no more help than Graves, as in both cases they give the two pictures almost identical titles and do not include any descriptions of the works.

5. The date is nowadays completely legible below the signature, but may not always have been so clear. Indeed, the first reference to the picture that describes it as being dated is NGA 1965, 68 (although Wolfgang Stechow did challenge the statement in NGA 1941, 97–98, that the picture was

“painted probably in 1665,” saying “I thought I could read the date quite distinctly below the signature.” Stechow letter, 9 June 1941, in NGA curatorial files.) The date appears to be old, but is painted in a different color from the signature. Its form does not conform with the inscription on the so-called pendant, which reads “M[e]yndert Hobbema.” Accounts of the signature itself are also inconsistent: Waagen 1854–1857, 166, the brochure produced c. 1940 by Duveen Brothers, and NGA 1941 all state that, like the earlier *A Wooded Landscape* (NGA 1937.1.61), *A View on a High Road* is signed “Meyndert Hobbema,” and Brouhiet 1938, 401, and HdG 1907–1927, 4: 413, also say that it is “signed in full.” Today the lettering on the canvas clearly reads “m. hobbema,” a form of signature that the artist employed more frequently than his full name. It seems likely that all or part of the original signature and date were somehow damaged, and subsequently reconstructed. Further changes may have occurred at a later date, perhaps a result of restoration or cleaning. Forthcoming technical examination may help clarify this problem.

6. See Schepers 1960.

7. Döhmman and Dingeldein 1934, 3: 144–145. The paintings are in the Louvre, Paris (no. M.1.270; HdG 1907–1927, 4: 401–402, no. 89, Brouhiet 1938, 441). (Cf. fig. 1 under *A Farm in the Sunlight*, 1937.1.60) and the National Gallery, London (no. 832; HdG 1907–1927, 4: 397, no. 76, Brouhiet 1938, 220).

8. Slive in The Hague 1981, 79, no. 22.

9. Acc. no. R.F. 1526, 31 x 40 in.; HdG 1907–1927, 4: 431, no. 173; Brouhiet 1938, 192.

10. 86.4 x 119.4 cm, Smith 1829–1842, 6: 134, no. 64; HdG 1907–1927, 4: 413, no. 120; Brouhiet 1938, 188.

11. Young 1820, 37, says that the figures were painted by Adriaen van de Velde. Several other nineteenth-century writers (Smith 1829–1842, 4: 134–135; Waagen 1854–1857, 166; Michel 1890b, 50) attribute them to Lingelbach.

12. See Broos 1989, 34–55.

13. The print was published by Boydell, London, 20 February 1786.

References

- 1820 Young: 37, no. 109, etched repro.
- 1829–1842 Smith, 6 (1835): 134–135, no. 65.
- 1844 Jameson: 266, no. 99.
- 1854 Jervis, 2: 225, 344.
- 1854–1857 Waagen: 2 (1854): 166.
- 1859 Thoré (Bürger): 28–44.
- 1861–1876 Blanc, 2: 1–12.
- 1890b Michel: 19, 50.
- 1891 Cundall: 58, 158.
- 1907–1927 HdG, 4 (1912): 394–395, no. 121.
- 1930 Rosenberg: no. 59, repro.
- 1931 Frankfurter: 22–34, repro.
- 1935 Tietze: 338, no. 194, repro. (also 1939 English ed.: 322).
- 1938 Brouhiet: 59, 196, 401, no. 189, repro.
- 1941 NGA: 97–98.
- 1949 Mellon: 99, repro.
- 1960 Baird: 22–23, repro.
- 1965 NGA: 68, no. 62.
- 1966 Stechow: 78.
- 1968 NGA: 59, repro.
- 1968 Frick Collection, 1: 224.
- 1975 NGA: 174–175, repro.

- 1976 Walker: 295, color repro.
 1982 Leeds: 16.
 1984 Wheelock: 38–39, color repro.
 1985 NGA: 202, repro.
 1987 Sutton: 347.
 1992 NGA: 138, color repro.

1937.1.60 (60)

A Farm in the Sunlight

1668
 Oil on canvas, 81.9 x 66.4 (32¼ x 26⅞)
 Andrew W. Mellon Collection

Inscriptions

Remnants of a signature and date at bottom right corner:
 . . *hbema* . 668¹

Technical Notes: The support, a fine-weight, plain-weave fabric, has been lined with the tacking margins folded out and incorporated into the picture plane, slightly enlarging the original dimensions. A dark reddish brown ground layer was applied overall, followed by a light brown imprimatura in the foreground, which also serves as a mid-tone. The x-radiograph shows a preliminary sketch rapidly executed in rough paint strokes with a loaded brush. Pentimenti are visible in the largest tree, whose trunk initially continued down to the figures and whose foliage extended higher. The artist also repositioned the figures and may have removed a figure group.²

Paint is applied in thin paste layers, with the foreground, middle ground, and background blocked in with vigorous strokes and individual features added with smaller brushes. The sky was painted first, with reserves left for the trees and landscape. Background elements are worked wet into wet, while middle distance reserves were left for barns and trees. Figures lie over the thinly painted foreground. Scattered small losses and abraded areas exist, along with two extremely large horizontal losses across the lower foreground. Conservation was carried out in 1992 to remove discolored varnish, retouchings, and nineteenth-century overpaint in the foreground. At this time foreground losses were inpainted, re-creating missing landscape details.

Provenance: Possibly R. van Smidt, Brussels. Corneille Louis Reijnders [d. 1821], Brussels, possibly by 1788;³ William Buchanan, London; George Watson Taylor, M. P. [d. 1841], London and later Erlestoke Park, Devizes, Wiltshire;⁴ (sale, Christie, London, 13–14 June 1823, no. 56, bought in);⁵ (sale, Robins, 9 July to 1 August 1832, no. 69);⁶ Charles J. Nieuwenhuys [1799–1883], Brussels and London; (sale, Christie & Manson, London, 10–11 May 1833 no. 128). Henri Hérès, Brussels and London; Leopold I [1790–1865], Palais Royal, Brussels; inherited by his son, Leopold II [1835–1909], Brussels; (F. Kleinberger & Co., Paris, in 1909); August de Ridder [1837–1911], Cronberg, near Frankfurt-am-Main, in 1910; (sale, Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, 2 June 1924, no. 26); (M. Knoedler & Co., New York); sold December 1924 to Andrew W. Mellon, Pittsburgh and Washington;⁷ deeded 28 December 1934 to The A. W. Mellon

Educational and Charitable Trust, Pittsburgh.

Exhibited: *British Institution for Promoting the Fine Arts in the United Kingdom*, London, 1818, no. 84. *Ausstellung der De Ridder Sammlung*, Städelches Kunstinstitut und Städtische Galerie, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1911–1913.⁸ *Dutch Masters of the Seventeenth Century*, Knoedler Galleries, New York, 1925, no. 17, repro. *El Siglo de Oro del Paisaje Holandés*, Madrid, 1994–1995, no. 32, repro. 132.

THIS RURAL LANDSCAPE scene has long been esteemed as one of Hobbema's finest paintings. In 1890 Michel described it as one of Hobbema's most remarkable works, and Bode, in the translation of his 1910 catalogue, termed it "a masterpiece with which few can compare."⁹ Its distinguished provenance dates back to the end of the eighteenth century. From its earliest appearance in the literature it formed a pendant to Hobbema's famous painting of a watermill in the Louvre (fig. 1).¹⁰ The two works were separated at the Nieuwenhuys sale in 1833.

As in other instances where pendant relationships seem to exist, no irrefutable proof exists that these works were originally intended to be hung together, although compositional and stylistic similarities reinforce the historical evidence. In both paintings the focus of the composition is the sunlit farm buildings in the middle ground. The shaded large trees that occupy the foreground have long, flowing trunks surmounted by an open structure of branches and foliage. Their dark brownish green tones act as a foil to the yellow glow of the sunlit distance. Above all, the vertical formats of the paintings, rare among Hobbema's works, argue for the hypothesis that they were intended to hang together. Other artists, including Salomon van Ruysdael, used this format for companion pieces.¹¹

The vertical format was one of the reasons given by Jakob Rosenberg for dating this work around or after 1670. Rosenberg also argued for a late date on the basis of the transparency of the upper parts of the trees, the exaggeration of specific Hobbema effects, and the reduction of the corporeality of the landscape.¹² Rosenberg it seems pushed the date too late. Painting in a vertical format became fashionable by about 1665 and often occurred in the work of Jacob van Ruysdael during the late 1660s. Although the trees in this work are somewhat elongated and the foliage is relatively transparent, stylistically they do not differ substantially from those in Hobbema's *A View on a High Road* (1937.1.62), signed and dated 1665. The most significant difference between these paintings is the increased complexity of the compositional structure of *A Farm in the Sunlight*. In this case, the viewer is denied easy access into the background