

**Picturing the Earth's History:  
Narrative Form and Landscape Illustration in Nineteenth-Century  
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**Abstract:**

Geological surveys of territories west of the Mississippi River, conducted just before and after the Civil War, were an important arena for testing and evaluating new theories about geological change. The reports produced for these surveys were thus "stories" in at least two senses: they recounted the progress of expeditions day-by-day but also, to varying degrees, tried to tell the story of how the unique landscape of the West was formed. This paper examines changes in narrative form that accompanied the increasing scientific focus of survey reports, culminating in Clarence King's *Systematic Geology* of 1878. In addition, recent art historical scholarship has puzzled over the use-value of illustrations found within survey reports. Rather than seeing them as merely "picturesque" views of dubious scientific value, this paper shows how they played a key role in reinforcing the narrative forms used to articulate new geological theory.