

238 Putnam Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139
February 7, 1991

Ms. Joanne Klein
American Paintings
Christie's
502 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Dear Ms. Klein:

Re: Golden October - Catskill. Oil on canvas, 10-1/4 x 15 inches.
Initials are placed at lower right: "E.J." Inscribed on top
stretcher bar verso: "Golden October - Catskill. Eastman Johnson
1869 - "

As you know, I examined this painting on January 28, 1991, at
Christie's East.

In my opinion this is a work by Eastman Johnson. Although he did not
paint many landscapes, Golden October exhibits many of the
characteristics of his other few landscapes of the 1860s. To name a
few: 1) the handling of paint on the trees, particularly the leaves
and branches at the right; 2) the atmospheric perspective and modeling
of the distant purple-toned mountain; 3) the handling of light and
dark throughout the painting and also on the foreground flat rocks.

Upon examination with an ultra violet light, I found that very little
restoration had been done to the painting. There were a few touches
on the left. What also glowed through were mysterious letters at the
top middle, which looked like "I G" (fat letters about one inch high
and slanted to the right). These are barely visible to the naked eye.

The letters "E.J." at the lower right may not have been done by
Johnson's hand. Such initials seem to have been added to his works at
a time much later than the execution of the painting; this was the
speculation of the conservator Sheldon Keck. (Many paintings in the
estate sale of 1907 are so initialed; however, this painting was not
included in that sale.) What seems to be authentic is the inscription
on the stretcher bar. The handwriting is very characteristic of

Johnson's inscriptions.

Related works: The painting is more modest than The Catskill Mill, which I included in my Eastman Johnson exhibition of 1972. (See the catalogue of that exhibition, Eastman Johnson (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art and Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1972), p. 69. In the summer of 1869 he married Elizabeth Buckley of Troy, New York, and they honeymooned in Murray Bay, Canada, where he painted at least one picture. I don't know his movements that October, but he could well have visited the Catskills, either in the company of his new bride or with painter friends. In later years he would go with his friend Jervis McEntee to the Maine woods.

You would be interested to note that the Brooklyn Museum has a photograph of this painting in the old Eastman Johnson files kept by John I. H. Baur, who in 1940 organized the first retrospective exhibition of the artist's work. He did not list it in his checklist published in the exhibition catalogue, and there are no notations on the back of the photograph. Perhaps he received it after the catalogue was published; after the exhibition Baur continued to collect Eastman Johnson material sent to him but did not update his records. My own records owe a debt to what he started.

I will include this picture in my catalogue raisonne, which will eventually be published. I would appreciate a black and white photograph for my files, in addition to the color transparency I have already.

Sincerely yours,

Patricia Hills
Art Historian