

Until March 9, 2006
809 6th Street, N.W. #32
Washington DC 20001
January 19, 2006

Roger Howlett
Childs Gallery
169 Newbury Street
Boston, MA 0w2116

Dear Roger:

RE: Eastman Johnson, (Portrait of Henrietta Desportes Field), oil on board, 28 x 22 ½ inches back; 25 ½ x 20 ½ inches sight; not signed.

I examined the painting at Child's Gallery on December 21, 2005. In my opinion the work is by the American genre painter Jonathan Eastman Johnson (1824-1906), and I will include it in my catalogue raisonné. We looked at the painting under an ultra violet light and the condition looks good, with perhaps a slight touchup on the nostrils and around the eyes.

I first saw this painting at Kennedy Galleries in New York on March 30, 1971. At the time I noted that it was thinly painted but a very pleasing image of a pretty older woman in a soft, diffuse light. The characteristics of Johnson's portraits, with slight graphite lines outlining the eye lids, nostrils, upper lip, chin, etc. are all there. The handling of color, light and shade is quite typical of Johnson's work.

The portrait is more likely to be Henrietta Desportes Field than Dorothy Dix, the identification which it had when at the Kennedy Galleries. I am glad you were able to do some research on Mrs. Field, and I will add it to my records.

I enclose a photocopy of my catalogue raisonne card of Johnson's portrait of Henrietta Desportes Field, oil on canvas, 23 x 19 inches, signed lower right "E. Johnson 1875," but which I never saw in person. It is listed in John I. H. Baur's catalogue as #186, and The Brooklyn Museum has a photograph. The owner back in 1940 was Miss Clara W. Herbert, but I do not know its present location. You will note the clear resemblance of both the features and the composition to your painting. Only the dress seems different. It was typical of Johnson to make copies after his commissioned paintings. Or perhaps your version was painted before the Baur #186?

Note also that Johnson showed a painting "H. M. Field" at the National Academy of Design in 1875. I don't have all my records here at my temporary residence, but I think I covered everything.

Sincerely,

Patricia Hills
Professor