

238 Putnam Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139
July 20, 1994

FAX 212-606-7039
Ms. Kay Childs
American Painting and Sculpture Department
Sotheby's
1334 York Avenue
New York, NY 10021

Dear Ms. Childs:

Re: "Shoemaker Hagerty's Shop," oil on academy board, 13 1/4
x 16 5/8 inches sight. Initialed LR: "E. J."

I examined this painting at Sotheby's on July 14, 1994, and in
my opinion the work is by Eastman Johnson (1824-1906), the
American genre and portrait painter.

It will include the painting in my catalogue raisonné of Eastman
Johnson and will call it "Shoemaker Hagerty's Shop"--Study for
The Nantucket School of Philosophy, circa 1887.

It was typical of Johnson to paint sketches of interiors or of
landscape scenes without figures (or with only one figure) and
then to make subsequent versions with the figures. This is the
case with your painting, which is the preliminary sketch for The
Nantucket School of Philosophy, 1887, oil on panel, 23 1/4 x 31
3/4 inches, Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore. That painting has
about six figures sitting around the stove in addition to the
shoemaker. Another Study for The Nantucket School of Philosophy,
circa 1887, oil on canvas, 22 x 27 inches, collection the
Milwaukee Art Center, also sketchy, contains four figures in
addition to the shoemaker.

The Nantucket School of Philosophy shows a gathering of old
Nantucket sea captains sitting around an old stove in the
shoemaker's shop as they recall the days of their youth when
they went whaling from Nantucket. In a period of rapid
industrialization, the 1870s and 1880s, pictures of old men, who
had once gone whaling, or of the older crafts, such as
shoemaking, were viewed with nostalgia by an American public
with nostalgia. In contemporary criticism Johnson was
specifically singled out for praise for painting scenes of
American life that were "quickly disappearing."

The style of Shoemaker's Hagerty's Shop is typical of Johnson's
sketch style. He constructs the room as a convincing three-
dimensional space, with floorboards receding into the
background. And he also studies the light effects within the

interior from the tall window at the right. Hence the massing of lights on the shoemaker, the modeling of the stove, and the highlights on objects against the left wall are convincing. Making a preliminary sketch that articulates the light and dark effects was part of Johnson's European training, and I suspect that Johnson painted the sketch from within the actual shop. He has also captured the typical "decor" of the shoemaker's shop: the horseshoe and magazines hanging on the back wall, the bottles on a shelf at the left, etc. The palette of Shoemaker's Haggerty's Shop has the typical, limited range of Johnson's colors for these sketches--whites, ochres, sienna, umbers, a bit of cadmium red, and with a touch of turquoise (the curtain at the right).

The painting seems in excellent condition and has a freshness to its composition. It probably doesn't look much different from when it was executed by Johnson.

Sincerely yours,

Patricia Hills
Art historian and author
of Eastman Johnson