

36 Harrison Street  
Brookline, MA 02146  
May 30, 1987

Mr. Stacey Roman  
Painting Department  
Butterfield and Butterfield  
220 San Bruno Avenue  
San Francisco, CA 94103

Dear Mr. Roman:

Thank you for sending me the photograph of the painting Watched Pot Never Boils, oil on canvas, 15-1/2 x 12-1/2 inches, inscribed lower right, "E.J." As you know, I examined this painting on April 24, 1987, at the Childs Gallery in Boston.

In my opinion the work is by the American painter Eastman Johnson (1824-1906). Stylistically it has many of the characteristics of Johnson's work in terms of the handling of the brush work: soft brushwork on the face with traces of graphite lines on some of the features, such as the lips, and more broadly handled in the background. Using a black light as part of my examination I noted that it seems to have had some restoration on the left side, but generally the face looks good.

I had records of the painting's history:

It was included as No. 17 in the Catalogue of the Eastman Johnson Sale, held by the American Art Association in 1907. The description reads as follows:

WATCHED POT NEVER BOILS

A young country girl, dressed in spotted calico gown with a brown apron, is sitting in a kitchen chair, leaning against a whitewashed wooden partition near an ordinary cooking stove, on which is an iron tea-kettle. A few garments and utensils hang upon the wall, and the window near the stove is covered by an old-fashioned painted shade.

Signed at the lower right, E. J.

Height, 14-1/2 inches; width, 12-1/2 inches

John I. H. Baur included the painting in the exhibition Eastman Johnson, 1824-1906: An American Genre Painter held at the Brooklyn Museum in 1940. It was described on p. 44 (not reproduced) and listed as No. 144 in Baur's checklist of Johnson works. The provenance was: Mrs. Eastman Johnson to General Thomas H. Hubbard to Mrs. Herbert S. Darlington.

In 1944 the painting was reproduced in Everett U. Crosby, Eastman Johnson

on Nantucket: His Paintings and Sketches of Nantucket: People and Scene,  
Nantucket Island, Massachusetts: Privately Printed. By that time the  
owner was the San Diego Fine Arts Gallery. I have not mentioned the  
painting in either of my books on Johnson: Eastman Johnson (New York:  
Clarkson N. Potter, 1972) or The Genre Painting of Eastman Johnson: The  
Sources and Development of His Style and Themes (New York: Garland  
Publishing, Inc., 1977). Until last month, I had never seen the painting,  
so I was glad for the opportunity to study it. Since I will include the  
painting in my forthcoming catalogue raisonné of Johnson's work, I would  
appreciate knowing the name of the new owner.

Sincerely yours,

*Patricia Hills*

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