

Eastman Johnson Catalogue Raisonné
60 Plaza St E., # 1H, Brooklyn, NY 11238

Founder and Director: Patricia Hills, PhD; Professor Emerita, Boston University
Project Manager and Co-Author: Abigael MacGibeny
Long-Term Steward: National Academy of Design

August 15, 2025

Bill Fiddler
DOYLE New York
175 East 87th Street
New York, NY 10128

Re: *Eliphalet Huntington Blatchford and Charles Hammond Blatchford*, August 1880. Oil on canvas, 27 ½ x 22 1/2 inches (Abigael's measurements). Signed lower left, "E. Johnson / Nantucket / Aug 1880".

We viewed this painting at Doyle New York on August 1, 2025. In our opinion the painting is by the American genre and portrait painter Eastman Johnson (1824–1906), and is included in the Eastman Johnson Catalogue Raisonné as Hills no. 31.7.2.

This painting is a double portrait of the two youngest sons of Eliphalet Wickes Blatchford and Mary Emily Williams Blatchford of Chicago. E. W. Blatchford was a manufacturer, longtime president of the Chicago Theological Seminary, and philanthropist who supported a wide range of social and cultural institutions. The biography *Eliphalet W. Blatchford & Mary E. W. Blatchford: The Story of Two Chicagoans* by Charles Hammond Blatchford, Jr., 1962, describes the painting's inception: "Mary Blatchford and her sons spent that summer of 1880 at Woods Hole, Massachusetts. She arranged for Charley and Huntington to sit for a portrait by Eastman Johnson at the artist's studio on Nantucket as a surprise gift to Eliphalet the following Christmas."

The brothers are posed closely, with the younger Eliphalet seated on a high stool as Charles stands. Their heads are side by side, facing the viewer with a unified alert gaze. Although Charles would have been about six years old at the time of the sitting and Eliphalet only four, they are portrayed as serious and dignified individuals. Their rosy cheeks and conspicuous Cupid's-bow lips manifest their youth, while their confident bearing and fine clothes convey their social status and prospects. Graphite outlining is evident around the boys' lips, noses, ears, chins, and hairlines. The boys' turquoise and red neck scarves and Eliphalet's collar and cuff are treated in an especially painterly manner. The outlining, brushwork, palette, and the emergence of the figures from luminous darkness are among the features characteristic of Johnson's work.

This portrait recalls both Johnson's earliest portraits of children and his latest around that time. See, for example, his pastel double portrait of Charles Appleton Longfellow and Ernest Wadsworth Longfellow of 1848 (Hills no. 43.7.6; Eliphalet Huntington Blatchford is posed like, and even physically resembles, Charles Appleton Longfellow), and *Harold McGuffey*, c. 1880 (Hills no. 31.5.9), which shares the characteristics discussed here, although McGuffey would have been only about two years old.

The canvas has been relined and restretched on a modern stretcher. Under UV light, several areas of inpainting were seen on the recto. These interventions were not visible to us under normal light, and the

surface appears to be in good, stable condition. There is some abrasion at the edges of the canvas, perhaps from prior stretching or framing.

A 1909 letter from Elizabeth Johnson, the artist's widow, to Mary Blatchford reveals the existence of a related drawing of the brothers—a "crayon," which she described as "those lovely boys so beautifully depicted and so strong and speaking in effect." This unlocated drawing likely was a study done from life for the painting to be completed later.

We appreciated the opportunity to examine this painting. Should you sell it, we would appreciate it if you would forward our outreach letter to the new owner, in order to maintain accurate provenance for the catalogue raisonné.

Best regards,

Abigail MacGibeny and Patricia Hills