

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

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**Long-Term Steward: National Academy of Design**

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Douglas Gold  
Eli Sterngass  
Lincoln Glenn Gallery  
17 East 67th Street, Suite 1A  
New York, NY 10065

This letter concerns the following three paintings:

1. *Adelaide*.  
Oil on board, 18 7/8 x 15 inches (Abigail's measurements). Initialed lower right, in brown oil: "E.J." Inscribed on verso, upper left, in graphite: "framed[?] / "Rosalinde" [superimposed over] "Adelaide" / "Adelaide".
2. *Wigwams*.  
Oil on board, 8 1/2 x 10 5/8 inches (Abigail's measurements). Inscribed on verso: "Kentucky Mountain Corn."
3. *John Van Schaick Lansing Pruyn*. Oil on canvas. Not measured in frame. Initialed and dated lower left, in brown oil: "E.J. 1883".

We viewed these paintings at Lincoln Glenn Gallery on February 27, 2025. In our opinion all three works are by the American genre and portrait painter Eastman Johnson (1824–1906). *Adelaide* is included in the Eastman Johnson Catalogue Raisonné as Hills no. 24.0.3; *Wigwams* is Hills no. 17.0.1; *John Van Schaick Lansing Pruyn* is Hills no. 31.1.173.

*Adelaide* originally was known to us from its description in the catalogue of the 1907 sale of Johnson's estate:

No. 42: "This is the half-length figure of a young girl, seated in an ordinary wooden chair, slightly resting her head upon her left hand. Her face is in three-quarters view to the right in a strong effect of light and shade, and her large dark eyes are turned slightly away from the spectator. Her dark hair is brushed back from her forehead, and she wears a loose gray blouse with variegated ribbon at the neck, and a gray skirt with a black patent leather belt. The background is a graded tone of warm gray.  
Signed at the lower right, E. J.  
Height, 19 inches; width, 15 inches."

The painting we viewed is true to this description in composition and palette. In addition to the generally characteristic technique, we noted characteristic details such as the selective graphite outlining of the subject's lips, chin, and ear, and judiciously applied yellow highlights that enliven her heavy gold bracelet and the bright, delicate gold chain attached to her belt. She looks as though she is deep in thought, perhaps troubled. In her serious aspect, sideways seated pose, and facial features, she strongly resembles

the subject of *Ruth* (Buffalo AKG Art Museum; Hills no. 25.1.8). These paintings are excellent examples of Johnson's interest in depicting the interior lives of adolescent girls and women in the 1870s, thus the estimated date of c. 1870–79.

On the verso, one of two inscriptions of “Adelaide” is overwritten with “Rosalinde”. Given the apparent indecision about the title, it seems possible that this painting could be the same as the work called *Rosalinde* that was included in the *Memorial Exhibition of Eastman Johnson*, February 9–13, 1907 (unlocated; currently Hills no. 36.0.2 in the EJCR).

*Wigwams*, too, was listed in the catalogue of the 1907 sale of Johnson's estate:

No. 7: "This is a study of an Indian camp, showing, in a row, three skin tepees of different shapes and sizes, and a small log cabin with birch bark roof. In the foreground on the left an Indian is seated mending a snowshoe, near him is perched a tame crow, and beside the cabin two men are engaged in cooking over a fire built on the ground. The background suggests rocky precipices with underbrush growing in the crevices of the ledges."

"Signed at the lower right, E. J., Murray Bay, July, 1869

Height, 8 ½ inches; length, 10 ½ inches"

After first viewing the painting in 1987, Dr. Hills noted that “Today, we cannot see the 'Murray Bay;' and instead of 'E. J.' we have 'E. Johnson.' Perhaps there was some tinkering of the signature." When we viewed the painting in February, for reasons unclear, no signature was visible to us in either normal or UV light.

The inscribed location and date of Murray Bay, July, 1869, seen at the time of the 1907 Sale indicates that Johnson painted the work while on his honeymoon with his wife Elizabeth Williams Buckley, of Troy, New York, after they were married on June 29<sup>th</sup>. While there, he painted other pictures of First Nations People, including *Indigenous Woman in Wigwam Interior* (Hills no. 17.0.2) and *Dressing the Doll* (Hills no. 17.0.3). Johnson had shown similar interest in depicting scenes of the lives of Indigenous people during his travels to the Lake Superior region in 1857. At its later date, the camp site shown in *Wigwams* also recalls in some aspects the maple sugar camp pictures Johnson painted in the 1860s.

The verso inscription “Kentucky Mountain Corn” in an unknown hand suggests a connection to corn whiskey, the making of which has a long history in Kentucky.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, when the painting was exhibited at M. Knoedler & Co. in 1946, a review in *The Art Digest* described the subject matter thus: “*Kentucky Mountain Corn*, a small canvas of illicit whiskey making with a foreground figure shelling the corn and a still in the offing, is remarkable for the enchanting color of the rude tents of these mountaineers, color which seems to turn from amber to beige before one's eyes in a gleaming splendor that might belong to some costly fabric.” However, based on the details observed in the scene as well as the context of its making, this seems to be a misinterpretation. The wigwams themselves clearly resemble those in Johnson's pictures of Ojibwe encampments, as well as traditional Innu tents.<sup>2</sup> Since the work was titled *Wigwams* in the 1907 Sale, with a more plausible description, the EJCR retains *Wigwams* as the main title of the work.

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<sup>1</sup> See Joseph Earl Dabney, *Mountain Spirits II: The Continuing Chronicle of Moonshine Life and Corn Whiskey, Wines, Ciders & Beers in America's Appalachians*, 1980, which includes a recipe for Kentucky Mountain Corn).

<sup>2</sup> For more information about the Innu people Johnson would have encountered in Murray Bay, see Scott Manning Stevens, “Documenting Presence: Eastman Johnson's Indigenous Scenes,” *Perspectives on Eastman Johnson*, *National Academy of Design* (New York), March 15, 2022 (<https://nationalacademy.org/perspectives/EJCR-Scott-Manning-Stevens>)

*John Van Schaick Lansing Pruyn* is one of four known portraits Johnson made of Pruyn, who was U.S. Representative from New York, 1867–69, and Chancellor of the University of the State of New York Board of Regents, 1862–77. Two are smaller: one, a bust-length portrait on canvas (New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Philipse Manor Hall State Historic Site; Hills no. 31.1.172); the other, a roughly painted full-length sketch on board (Farnsworth Art Museum, Hills no. 31.1.173). The present portrait (according to the plaque on the frame, a “Completed study for the life sized portrait placed in the Capitol at Albany”), is a small version of a very large portrait that was destroyed in a fire in the New York State Capitol building in 1911 (Hills no. 31.1.174). The large portrait is known from its likely appearance in a stereoview of the New York State Senate Chamber before the fire. The large portrait and the small study share the same composition: Pruyn, wearing a dark academic gown, stands in an office, next to a table, facing the viewer. In the large portrait, his hand is articulated and clearly rests on a white book or stack of papers; in the small study, the hand is undeveloped and the materials under it are merely suggested by a stroke of white.

This painting is typical of Johnson’s almost exclusive turn to portraiture in the 1880s. Many of his subjects were leaders of government and academia, and he often made more than one version to suit different purposes. The stylized way he inscribed the date, in which the two “8”s in “1883” have flat tops, was characteristic of his practice in this period.

We appreciated the opportunity to examine these paintings. Should you sell them, we would appreciate it if you would forward our outreach letters to the new owners, in order to maintain accurate provenances for the catalogue raisonné.

Best regards,

Abigael MacGibeny and Patricia Hills