

238 Putnam Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139
December 18, 1992

Ms. Kathleen D. Martin
Assistant Vice President
American Paintings and Sculpture Department
Sotheby's
1334 York Avenue
New York, NY 10021

Dear Ms. Martin:

Re: A Boy in the Maine Woods, oil on academy board, 12 x 20 1/8 inches. Inscribed lower right **left**: "E" [once had full initials "E.J."]

I examined this painting at Sotheby's on November 27, 1992, prior to its sale on December 3. In my opinion this is an authentic Eastman Johnson painting and I will be including it in my catalogue raisonné.

Before you wrote to me, I corresponded with a dealer who was writing on behalf of Mr. Richard S. DuPont, who had purchased it from Kennedy Galleries, New York, in 1967 or 1968.

The painting was included as Lot No. 99 in the estate sale of Johnson's work held at the American Art Galleries, February 26 and 27, 1907. The description reads as follows:

"The winter logging season is over, and the snow is partly melted from the ground. With the exception of one sturdy tree which rises out of the picture at the left, all the large logs have been cut, and only small saplings and underbrush remain in the great forest. In the foreground, on the right, a youth stands with his hands in his pockets in a contemplative attitude near the smouldering embers of a fire, which has been built at the end of a split log. A few spots of wintry sky show between the early spring foliage at the top of the picture."

At the time of the 1907 sale, the picture measured 13 x 22 inches and was inscribed lower right "E. J."

The painting has the characteristic brushwork of Johnson. The handling of the paint in the foreground is loose, but firmed down with, perhaps, a palette knife. The face of the boy is only hinted at but the figure is painted with firmness. The

illusion of depth is beautifully done with sfumato effects in the distance where the snow-covered ground disappears into the forest of saplings. Light touches of yellow green branches make for a nice effect through the background.

We examined the painting with an ultra-violet light and saw slight touchups here and there.

Although Johnson followed the Union troops during the years of the Civil War, he also returned to the Maine woods in the early 1860s to paint the scenes of his childhood--the maple sugar festivities. This painting would have been done at that time.

I enclose photocopies of the estate sale catalogue title page and entry No. 99.

Sincerely yours,

Patricia Hills
art historian