



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Eastman Johnson Letters, 1851-1899, in the Archives of American Art

Erin Corley

Funding for the processing and digitization of this collection
was provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

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Archives of American Art
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Eastman Johnson letters
Date:	1851-1899
Identifier:	AAA.johneast
Creator:	Johnson, Eastman, 1824-1906
Extent:	0.2 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The letters of Eastman Johnson measures 0.2 linear feet and contains 12 items that date from 1851 to 1899. The letters provide scattered documentation of his career as a painter and printmaker.

Administrative Information

Provenance

Items were donated in 1979 by Caroline Johnson Brown, Johnson's grand-niece, in 1976 by Letitia Howe, and by Charles E. Feinberg, an active donor to the Archives of American Art between 1955 and 1962, and were microfilmed after receipt.

Alternative Forms Available

The papers of **Eastman Johnson** were digitized in 2005 by the Archives of American Art, and total 29 images.

Processing Information

The collection was received in several accessions and microfilmed at some point after receipt on reels D10, D30, D316, 2814, 5030, 1817, and 3483. The entire collection was fully processed, arranged, and described by Erin Corley and scanned in 2005, with funding provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Preferred Citation

Eastman Johnson letters, 1851-1899. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions on Access

The collection has been digitized and is available online via AAA's website.

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Biographical Note

American painter and printmaker Jonathan Eastman Johnson was born in Lovell, Maine in 1824. After apprenticing with a Boston lithographer, he moved to Washington D.C. in 1845 and became a portraitist of prominent Americans, including Daniel Webster and Dolly Madison. Beginning in 1849, Johnson spent two years at the Royal Academy in Dusseldorf, Germany, studying with Emanuel Leutze, and three years at The Hague. After returning to America in 1855, he settled in New York and focused on painting American genre subjects including Native Americans, African Americans, and farmers. He married Elizabeth Buckley in 1869, and they bought a home in Nantucket where he spent every summer for the rest of his life. After 1880, as the popularity of genre paintings declined, Johnson focused again on portraiture. He died in 1906.

Scope and Content Note

The letters of Eastman Johnson measures 0.2 linear feet and contains 12 items that date from 1851 to 1899. The letters provide scattered documentation of his career as a painter and printmaker.

The collection includes a letter to Mr. Champney concerning a painting by Eugene Benson, a letter to Charles Lanman, personal Secretary to Daniel Webster, a letter to Alfred Ordway, artist and Director of Paintings at the Boston Athenaeum, a letter to friend and patron John Coyle, and a letter to Mr. Cozzens concerning a painting which was already sold. Also found are two letters to artist and close friend Jervis McEntee, a letter to an unidentified Mrs. P, stating that he must go to Albany before starting another picture, a letter to Mr. Clark concerning a portrait, and a letter to Dr. Hochheimer regarding a print by Henry Wolf after one of Johnson's paintings. Also included in the collection is an oversize letter, written by Johnson in Dusseldorf, to his friend Charlotte Child, in which he speaks of his impressions of Germany, mutual friends, and working in Leutze's studio.

Arrangement

Due to the small size of this collection, items are categorized into one series consisting of two folders. Items are arranged chronologically.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Painters -- New York (State) -- New York
Painting, Modern -- 19th century -- New York (State) -- New York
Portrait painters -- New York (State) -- New York

Names:

Benson, Eugene, 1837-1908
Lanman, Charles, 1819-1895
Leutze, Emanuel, 1816-1868
McEntee, Jervis, 1828-1891
Ordway, Alfred T., 1819-1897
Wolf, Henry, 1852-1916

Container Listing

Series 1: Eastman Johnson Letters, 1851-1899, undated

2 Folders (Box 1, OV 2)

Folder 1

[Eastman Johnson Letters, 1851-1899, undated](#)

- Notes:
- Handwritten card, "What is called the 'line' of beauty," undated
 - To [Charles] Lanman, May 10, circa 1846
 - To Mr. Champney, March 4, circa 1870s
 - To Mr. [Alfred] Ordway, June 3, 1859
 - To [John] Coyle, March 13, 1864
 - To Mr. Cozzens, February 8, 1865
 - To Jervis [McEntee], October 12, 1879
 - To Jervis [McEntee], September 22, 1881
 - To Mrs. [P.?] (name illegible, photocopy), January 16, 1884
 - To Mr. Clark, June 3, 1891
 - To Dr. E. Hochheimer, April 20, 1899

Box OV 2, Folder 1

[Letter to Charlotte \[Child\], March 25, 1851](#)

Notes: includes transcript

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