



GEORGE HERBERT MCCORD (1848-1909)

Seascape

Oil on canvas

18 1/16 x 30 1/8 inches

Signed lower left “G.H. McCord A.N.A.”

Provenance: Private collection, Birmingham, AL

A member of the second generation of Hudson River School painters, George Herbert McCord is known for his atmospheric landscape and marine paintings which capture a variety of locales and are executed in a variety of media—including oil, pastel, and watercolor.

McCord was born in 1848 in New York City, where he lived and worked his entire life. After 1883, he kept an additional studio in Morristown, NJ. McCord traveled throughout North America, painting in the Berkshire, Adirondack and Laurentian mountain ranges, the Hudson River Valley, the Coast of New England, the Upper Mississippi, and Florida, which had become popular among Eastern vacationers. He was among a select group of artists commissioned by the Santa Fe Railroad to paint the Grand Canyon, and also participated in a special painting excursion to the Erie Canal. His travels in Europe were equally expansive, taking him to England, Scotland (having been commissioned by Andrew Carnegie to paint the scenery around his castle there), France, the Netherlands, and Italy.

McCord was well-educated, having attended Claverack College amidst the Catskills in Claverack, NY, which provided instruction in classical, French, German, English, music, painting, military, commercial, telegraphic and agricultural studies. He also studied with the accomplished painter and inventor of Morse code, Samuel F.B. Morse, and with the Scottish-born landscape painter, James Fairman.

McCord was active in numerous art clubs and institutions in New York, including the National



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Academy of Design, which elected him an Associate member in 1880, the American Watercolor Society, the Brooklyn Art Club, the Salmagundi Club, and the Lotos Club. He was also a member of Artists Fund Society in Philadelphia. McCord exhibited regularly at the National Academy and the Brooklyn Art Association, and was included in exhibitions at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, the Boston Art Club, and the Art Institute of Chicago.

McCord's great success is evidenced by his numerous awards: he received a bronze medal at the Mechanics Institute Fair in Boston in 1883, a silver medal at the New Orleans Exposition of 1885, the prestigious Shaw Prize of the Salmagundi Club in 1891, a silver medal at the Charleston Exposition of 1901, and a medal at the St. Louis Exposition of 1904. In January of 1904, his pastels of the coast of Maine, Massachusetts, New York, and England were featured in an exhibition at the Salmagundi Club. In addition to painting, McCord wrote articles on art for the *Richfield News*.

Seascape is a prime example not only of McCord's talent as a painter, but as a distinctive voice in the tradition of marine and maritime painting in America. Artists' painterly focus on seascapes and ships in the second half of the nineteenth century, which had its roots in the naval traditions of the Dutch and British schools, emerged more clearly in America with the second generation of Hudson River School painters. These painters depicted the marine characteristics of the nation's history—from maritime industries, such as shipbuilding and whaling, to the same naturalistic tendencies that turned many of their contemporaries away from representations of urban centers.

Seascape serves as a testament to this tradition as well as the meticulous skill that made McCord so highly acclaimed in his lifetime. The painting, which depicts three stately sailboats set amidst cresting waves, underscores McCord's remarkable talent not only in rendering landscape details, but also in articulating movement implicit in the sea's elemental circumstance. The rolling waves of the surf, the billowing sails of the ships, and the blow of ocean spray against the crafts' bows are rendered in perfect detail, suggestive of the temperamental atmospheric effects of a day spent at sea.